



HMCPSP

HM Crown Prosecution
Service Inspectorate

An inspection of CPS Cymru- Wales: Area Inspection Programme Phase 3

January 2026

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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 these 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 found, made recommendations for improvement and highlighted aspects of performance that were done well. When we decided to develop the Area Inspection Programme (AIP) in 2021, I was determined to not only report what we found, but also develop a programme that could determine what influences the quality of casework.

This report is a culmination of the programme for our assessment of CPS Cymru-Wales. Our first report, published in 2021, 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. This inspection took place in 2024.

CPS Cymru-Wales was an Area that showed some improvement between the baseline and follow-up inspections for Crown Court casework, but deterioration in magistrates’ court scores. The fact that the Area had maintained and improved quality in the most serious cases, but not for the high-volume magistrates’ court work, was core to why we decided to inspect CPS Cymru-Wales.

Similar to the inspection we carried out in CPS Yorkshire and Humberside¹, this inspection assesses what drives casework quality, and why CPS Cymru-Wales had improved substantially in one aspect of its casework but not across all types.

This report sets out our findings and thoughts on what sits behind the difference we saw between our baseline and follow-up inspections. Whilst it is uniquely about what we found in Cymru-Wales, we are testing those aspects that we believe determine an Area’s performance: legal leadership and assurance, resource utilisation and management, and finally stakeholder engagement and collaboration.

I will not repeat here findings of the report which are set out in the summary at chapter 3, but it is clear that our findings highlight themes which had a direct

¹ [Area Inspection Programme Phase 3 – CPS Yorkshire and Humberside, HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate, 30 September 2025](#)

impact on casework quality. Interestingly, these are similar to that we reported in the Yorkshire and Humberside report, but there are some unique differences.

Loss of experience combined with the recruitment of large numbers of new prosecutors and managers, who, for the sake of development and risk management, are initially placed in the magistrates' court unit. This clearly impacted quality, and the change in the senior cadre of management also impacted the stability and progress of the Area. This is interesting given that, historically, Cymru-Wales has had strong performance compared to other CPS local Areas.

The Area recognised the challenges of large-scale recruitment and change and has developed training and support to expedite learning for those in the magistrates' court unit. I am assured that this will increase the quality of casework in the fullness of time.

When comparing CPS Cymru-Wales with our findings from CPS Yorkshire and Humberside, it is noticeable that there is a gap in the Area in respect of setting clear actions with clear accountability as a means to drive improvement. This not only impacted internal change but was evident in some of the work with the police, which meant that some of the same issues that impacted quality persisted, more so in the magistrates' courts.

However, we must recognise that the Area improved quality between baseline and follow-up in Crown Court casework. This was not an easy task given the backlogs and increase in caseload. I am assured that the action taken in the Area to work through some of the challenges of increasing experience will arrest the decline we identified.

I encourage CPS management, both nationally and locally, to consider the findings in the CPS Yorkshire and Humberside report and work with senior management in Cymru-Wales to consider what may help drive improvement with more structure and pace.

I thank CPS Cymru-Wales for their support with the inspection and allowing us to test our assumptions of what drives casework quality.



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). The inspectorate is responsible for assessing and reporting on the quality of legal casework produced by the CPS, and is one of the functions HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (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, it 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, leadership was strong, and 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. That is its core function and one of the five strands of the CPS 2025 strategy.² We examined 90 cases from each of the 14 CPS Areas as well as a range of documents.

2.5. The case analysis and document review formed the basis of our findings, judgements and scoring. We assessed the other four strands of the CPS 2025 strategy (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 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' court units (MCUs), Crown Court teams, 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-

² CPS 2025 has now been superseded by CPS 2030 which is the CPS's next five-year strategy launched on 1st April 2025.

making. When we assessed grip, we considered the effectiveness and efficiency of case progression and management 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 Cymru-Wales baseline report can be accessed here.³

2.10. Having set the baseline of performance, it was our intention to follow-up the initial inspections and 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. Identify where improvements have been made and/or performance has deteriorated and thereby identify 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 Areas where casework quality has been assessed as declining
- to allow us to make direct comparisons, as the follow-up AIP assessed casework quality using the same measures as in the baseline.

2.12. We analysed the AIP baseline and follow-up data to highlight the direction of travel of performance for each of the 14 CPS Areas and set those findings out in our follow-up report.⁴ We used that data to identify the CPS Areas to visit in phase 3 of the AIP. We chose Areas where there was significant improvement or decline to examine what drives casework quality. We selected CPS Yorkshire and Humberside and CPS Cymru-Wales.

2.13. 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.

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

³ [Area inspection programme CPS Cymru-Wales, HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate, 12 October 2021](#)

⁴ [Area Inspection Programme – Follow-up, HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate, 28 January 2025](#)

2.15. The objective of phase 3 of AIP was to assess whether and how these factors impacted the CPS Area's results for added value and grip following the data from the baseline AIP. By doing so, we seek to gain insights that can inform improvements in casework quality and enhance overall operational effectiveness across all CPS Areas.

2.16. CPS Cymru-Wales results for added value and grip declined from the baseline to follow-up, across both magistrates' court and Crown Court. The data from AIP presents CPS Cymru-Wales as having declined in both added value (down 8.4 percentage points) and grip (down 6.2 percentage points) in the MCU from our baseline figures. In the Crown Court team, added value improved (up 5.2 percentage points) but grip declined, albeit from a relatively high starting point (down 1.2 percentage points) from our baseline figures. Therefore, we selected CPS Cymru-Wales as the second CPS Area to be inspected as part of AIP3⁵.

| Added Value and Grip | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|-----------|---------------------|
| Added value | Magistrates' court | | |
| | Baseline | Follow-up | Direction of Travel |
| Cymru-Wales | 64.9% | 56.5% | ▼ |
| | Crown Court | | |
| | Baseline | Follow-up | Direction of Travel |
| Cymru-Wales | 65.5% | 70.7% | ▲ |
| Grip | Magistrates' court | | |
| | Baseline | Follow-up | Direction of Travel |
| Cymru-Wales | 66.2% | 60.0% | ▼ |
| | Crown Court | | |
| | Baseline | Follow-up | Direction of Travel |
| Cymru-Wales | 76.8% | 75.6% | ▼ |

⁵ CPS Yorkshire and Humberside was the first Area to be inspected as part of AIP3. Our report was published on 30 September 2025. [Area Inspection Programme Phase 3 – CPS Yorkshire and Humberside, HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate](#).

Context

2.17. CPS Cymru-Wales has offices at Cardiff, Swansea and Mold and is aligned with South Wales, Gwent, Dyfed Powys and North Wales police forces. It covers 13 magistrates' courts and four Crown Court centres.

2.18. In the first quarter of 2025-26, the Area's magistrates' courts caseload stood at 23,789, which represented an increase of 7% from the first quarter of 2024-25. During the same period, the Area's Crown Court caseload was 4,191, which was an increase of 4.8%.

2.19. In the 12 months to March 2025, the Area had the full time equivalent of 305 staff and its budget for the fiscal year 2024-25 was £28,462,064.

Methodology

2.20. In conducting this inspection of CPS Cymru-Wales, we sought to answer the inspection question: What drives casework quality in the Area?

2.21. During June and July 2025, the inspection team spent three weeks on site, conducting interviews and focus groups with staff from CPS Cymru-Wales and other 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 all four police forces, including Police and Crime Commissioners: South Wales Police, Gwent Police, Dyfed Powys Police and North Wales Police
- 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
- interviews with trade union and defence representatives.

2.22. We requested and received documents from the Area 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 inspection question.

2.23. Inspectors conducted checks on 12 live prosecution cases (six 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.

2.24. We examined eight non-advocacy/casework Individual Quality Assessments (IQA)⁶ 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.

2.25. 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 Cardiff, Swansea, Mold, Merthyr Tydfil, Newport and Llanelli.

2.26. In advance of the on-site phase of our inspection, we distributed a questionnaire to all staff in CPS Cymru-Wales. Each question addressed a specific component: 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 report⁷.

2.27. This inspection was led by legal inspectors Dan Richardson and Eleanor Reyland. They were assisted by senior legal inspector Jeetinder Sarmotta, and legal inspectors Lauranne Middleton, Oriana Frame, Siaf Alam and Mark Langan. The inspection was supported by Business Services Team Administrators Shauna Compton and Ben Hayter.

⁶ 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.

⁷ The survey response rate was 21.6%.

3. Report Summary

Report Summary

3.1. Inspectors found that casework quality was a clear priority and focus for the Area, with some pockets of excellence that clearly had an impact on driving high-quality casework, and some aspects that were weaker and so were having less of an impact.

3.2. The Area demonstrated a proactive approach to leadership and communication, using a variety of channels such as all-staff calls, weekly bulletins, team meetings and intranet updates to keep staff informed and engaged. There was also a clear strategy designed to foster transparency and inclusivity. Introducing a way of increasing consistency in the dissemination of organisational messages, by line managers in team meetings, would further underpin this approach and ensure clarity and cohesion across the Area.

3.3. The Chief Crown Prosecutor (CCP) was particularly visible and engaged, regularly visiting offices and maintaining an open-door policy. This visibility fostered trust and a sense of connection across the Area. While the visibility of other managers varied, especially in court-based roles, the overall culture is one of openness and peer support.

3.4. The CCP described CPS Cymru-Wales as going through a period of transition. That is because the Area has faced significant challenges due to the sharp decline in experienced staff during 2022-2024 as well as changes to the Senior Leadership team, which as our AIP findings show has impacted case work quality in the magistrates' court.

3.5. When we carried out the baseline assessment in the Area in 2021, it had a stable workforce that had extensive experience. By the time we carried out our follow-up assessment in 2024, this had changed considerably, with significant changes at prosecutor and legal manager levels. This increased volume of new and inexperienced staff has had an impact on casework quality with the newer, less experienced prosecutors based in the magistrates' court unit (MCU) and the more experienced prosecutors in the Crown Court and Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO) teams. This was also reflected in the experience of the front-line legal management cadre.

3.6. The significant change in experience in the magistrates' court is reflected in our follow-up findings which showed a decline in added value and grip. The decline in performance of the MCU is set against the stable performance of the Crown Court team which continues to perform well, with an improvement in added value although with a small decline in grip for Crown Court casework, but both still

reflecting good quality casework at over 70% for both added value and grip. The Area has understandably focused its deployment of experienced resource on more serious casework.

3.7. Training and development in the Area were a strength. Staff widely reported that training had led to improvements in casework quality. Our inspection survey revealed that 83.3% felt that training had positively impacted the quality of their casework⁸.

3.8. Monthly bitesize development sessions in the MCU were introduced to address performance issues and were praised by prosecutors for their relevance and accessibility. Focused training on the public interest stage of the Code for Crown Prosecutors ('the Code') improved the quality of charging decisions and reviews. A Crown Court team away day helped boost morale and reconnect staff with the broader impact of their work.

3.9. We found that the national training for new operational delivery staff was generally effective, but subject to delays occasioned by the need to carry out mandatory training and accreditation on the case management system and redaction training, which limited early productivity. Peer-led learning was common; while indicative of a collaborative team culture, this risked inconsistency.

3.10. Training and development has been further strengthened by mock trials in the MCU. These events, led by District Crown Prosecutors (DCPs) and involving police colleagues, provided valuable courtroom experience and targeted advocacy training aimed at increasing the capability and experience of magistrates' courts prosecutors. Prosecutors were assigned trial elements, with assessment and assurance by legal managers through feedback and peer-led sessions to reinforce learning. The initiative was well received and set for wider rollout. This was good practice.

3.11. To address the shortage of Welsh-speaking lawyers, the Area has launched the Welsh Legal Trainee Scheme. This strategic initiative supports both legal language compliance and workforce development. The scheme helps drive casework quality in prosecutions concerning Welsh speaking defendants and victims and witnesses.

3.12. For legal managers, the Area has introduced the Legal Leadership Forum (LLF). This monthly forum offers structured training and peer learning, with a focus on legal knowledge and internal talent development, and is one of the tools the Area uses to develop its less experienced legal managers.

⁸ Survey question: What impact has the training provided to frontline legal or non-legal CPS staff had on the quality of casework?

3.13. Workload pressures were frequently cited by prosecutors as a barrier to accessing longer or national training courses. While prosecutors across all levels expressed pride in their work and motivation to achieve just outcomes, the complexity and volume of caseloads were seen by many to hinder consistent high-quality output.

3.14. Since the pandemic, the Area has had to adjust to reduced staffing levels and experience, especially in senior positions, due to retirements, promotions and staff moving to Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) Headquarters' roles. Recruitment has improved, but onboarding coincided with experienced staff leaving, creating continuity and training challenges. While succession planning and retention efforts are now in place, earlier gaps contributed to pressure.

3.15. High turnover, temporary promotions and recruitment from non-criminal backgrounds have also contributed to create gaps in leadership capability. This has affected oversight, performance management and casework quality, particularly in the MCU due to lack of confidence among managers to tackle issues.

3.16. Prosecutors in the MCU expressed the view that post-induction support was lacking. Due to the inexperience of some managers, we were told that new prosecutors seek to fill skills gaps themselves through informal shadowing of experienced colleagues. This approach can put casework quality at risk in the absence of effective managerial oversight.

3.17. Some legal managers expressed concern about the induction process for newly promoted DCPs. Although an induction plan exists, it is not consistently followed or recognised as part of a formal training pathway, possibly due to the high number of legal managers on temporary promotion who were unable to access the full induction programme. Consequently, this has left broader management competencies underdeveloped. Coupled with the level of new managers in the MCU management cadre, this has an adverse impact on casework quality.

3.18. The Area has a development scheme for prosecutors in the magistrates' court unit. To address skills gaps and build experience the Area has a policy for prosecutors in the magistrates' court to move between advocacy, charging and review roles every four to six months. This approach aims to improve efficiency and casework quality by allowing lawyers to focus on one aspect of the role at a time, develop expertise, and respond flexibly to changing business needs. For instance, resources were shifted to tackle charging backlogs, quickly reducing the number of overdue charging cases.

3.19. The Area's local induction programme was introduced in 2023-24 when they experienced a high volume of new prosecutors joining. It received national

recognition for its structured and tailored approach, which included detailed timetables, mentoring expectations and regular progress reviews. This was identified as good practice.

3.20. Although all staff are encouraged to work together across the Area, this is not consistently supported by joint ownership of issues and outcomes. As we set out in our recent report of CPS Yorkshire and Humberside⁹, effective collaborative working between legal and operational delivery staff is fundamental to the effective and efficient delivery of high-quality casework. A common theme heard in CPS Cymru-Wales staff interviews was the lack of effective communication between legal and operational delivery teams. Operational delivery staff expressed the view that as well as physical separation and remote working, they often felt excluded from strategic discussions, which has hindered informal learning opportunities and collaborative working.

3.21. However, a paralegal officer pilot initiative in the Mold office is due to be launched in September 2025, after our on-site activity concluded but before publication of our report. The pilot seeks to redefine roles within the Crown Court team, allowing prosecutors to focus on legal decision-making and strategy, while paralegals provide enhanced legal support. This initiative is expected to foster joint ownership of cases, improve compliance and strengthen collaboration between operational delivery and legal teams. Despite some of these challenges, staff morale remains high and the culture across all teams was described as supportive.

3.22. Throughout interviews, staff expressed the view that managers were held in high regard. We were told that there was regular one-to-one, team and Area engagement, with staff feeling well-supported. Some prosecutors commented on how much they welcomed the open-door policy adopted by several managers, including the senior leadership team. High levels of approachability, a strong willingness to discuss cases and eagerness to learn from these discussions contribute to improving casework quality. But inexperience in some places hinders this effectiveness across the Area as a whole.

3.23. Governance structures, such as record keeping, monitoring action logs and measuring outputs, were in place across all units but inconsistently applied. Performance data is essential for monitoring and improving casework, helping managers allocate resources and motivating staff when it is relevant to their roles. A strong example of effective data use was seen in the Crown Court team, where targeted efforts reduced overdue charging cases significantly. Managers used key

⁹ [Area Inspection Programme Phase 3 – CPS Yorkshire and Humberside, HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate, 30 September 2025](#)

performance indicators to highlight progress and identify areas needing support, which has improved casework quality.

3.24. However, there were inconsistencies in how data was shared and understood across teams. Some staff, particularly in operational delivery roles, said they found the data irrelevant to their roles or lacking context. Prosecutors told us that they valued data when it was clearly linked to their work. Senior managers reviewed key performance data regularly, but there was an inconsistency in how it was then shared with teams at an operational level to drive improvement.

3.25. Although we saw evidence, more so in the Crown Court unit, of action being taken to drive improvement a more forensic and structured approach, to support improvement activity would be helpful. While it was evident that analysis and performance data was used in some places to proactively identify and drive actions with individuals who are then held to account for delivery, this was not consistent. There was evidence of long-standing issues drifting and not being fixed. With a more consistent focus on follow-up to actions across the Area there would be a positive effect on driving overall casework quality improvements.

3.26. To increase the effectiveness of Individual Quality Assessments (IQAs) in improving casework quality, the Area introduced a revised IQA process. This process was akin to the approach we recommended in our IQA report published in February 2025¹⁰ where there is a collaborative coaching and mentoring-style case conversation that leads to the completion of the IQA form. Our assessment of Area IQA shows that there is more for the Area to do to improve the quality of their assessments.

3.27. Local Case Management Panels provide senior oversight for high-risk or sensitive cases, supporting lawyers and ensuring quality, though their limited scope restricts broader impact. Informal case discussions and thematic panels are also being used to address specific concerns, such as evidence-led domestic abuse prosecutions, but the lack of formal recording and follow-up actions weakened effectiveness.

3.28. A Casework Quality Board has been introduced in the MCU to improve decision-making and advocacy, with monthly themes reinforced through targeted IQAs. Again, a more structured approach to actions and outcomes would support the impact that this board has on casework quality.

3.29. The Area has systems in place to monitor Custody Time Limits (CTLs). Case review and assurance logs were being completed in accordance with the national policy, with weekly checks and escalation protocols in place. The Area generally

¹⁰ [Individual Quality Assessment: An inspection of how the CPS uses IQA to monitor and improve casework quality. HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate, 27 February 2025](#)

shows strong performance, with isolated CTL failures and a proactive approach. Weaknesses in magistrates' courts CTL casework are linked to inexperience and lack of ownership. A process change now ensures lawyers retain CTL cases during team rotations to improve consistency.

3.30. Although victims and witnesses were a priority for Cymru-Wales, we found at the time of our inspection the Victim Liaison Unit (VLU) was undergoing significant transition following the departure of a long-serving team leader. While this created some challenges, including a lack of Welsh-speaking officers and limited participation in strategic meetings, the Area was aware of these issues and was taking action to address them.

3.31. Domestic abuse was a strategic priority across Cymru-Wales, with close collaboration between police and CPS leading to more efficient file preparation and victim engagement. Local Criminal Justice Boards (LCJBs) monitor key performance indicators, such as pre-charge timeliness, which has seen significant improvement. Joint action to tackle court backlogs have been addressed by increasing court availability, including on weekends and holidays. Leaders in the Area play a proactive role in the LCJBs in Cymru-Wales which in turn have improved specific aspects of casework quality, particularly through a focus on domestic abuse cases.

3.32. Joint Operational Improvement Meetings (JOIMs) are intended to be the main forum for operational collaboration and improvement between the police and CPS. However, we found they were poorly recorded and overly focused on data presentation rather than actions to drive improvement. The data used is often outdated or lacks analytical support and CPS Cymru-Wales struggles to meet the level of detail requested by police forces. Strategic JOIMs faced similar challenges, with no clear evidence that they were positively influencing casework quality, despite recent governance changes aimed at improving consistency. Despite these challenges, CPS Cymru-Wales has recently demonstrated strong performance in Director's Guidance Assessment compliance, ranking highest nationally in June 2025.

3.33. The Area holds Local Scrutiny and Involvement Panels (LSIPs) three times a year to discuss issues and improve CPS practices. Panels on Hate Crime and Violence Against Women and Girls showed strong community engagement and robust discussions, but again, action tracking was weak and lessons learned were not consistently followed up. While some improvements were noted, the lack of formal monitoring makes it difficult to assess the impact of the LSIPs.

3.34. The most significant improvements in casework standards have come from strategic partnership work and targeted training initiatives conducted outside the

JOIMs framework. These included workshops on case action plans, disclosure training and collaborative efforts to understand digital forensic challenges. Some of these efforts were described by police as transformative.

3.35. The Area has strong strategic relationships with the police, judiciary, HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) and community groups. The CCP and senior managers were well-regarded by external partners with evidence of meaningful engagement, though this was not always reflected at an operational level.

3.36. Quarterly meetings between HMCTS and the CPS were seen to be constructive, with improvements noted in casework quality and disclosure practices. However, operational delivery staff raised concerns about decisions taken by HMCTS, such as assigning trials to remand courts, which adversely affect casework quality.

3.37. Operational efficiency has been targeted through the brigading of plea and trial preparation hearing courts, where hearings were grouped on Mondays and Fridays in Cardiff Crown Court. This change, supported by the deployment of a legal manager at court, has led to more constructive engagement in court and better case progression. Data analysis was underway at the time of our inspection to assess the impact of this change and inform future improvements.

3.38. Listing practices were causing a strain on CPS resources and affecting preparation and communication with victims and witnesses, with the short notice of venue changes in the Crown Court coupled with the geographical spread of court centres compounding the issue. The Area is engaging to influence change.

3.39. Overall, the Area has demonstrated an effective relationship with the courts which is helping to drive casework quality. An example can be seen through the collaborative working with the police and HMCTS at the start of 2025. The Area noticed a significant rise in trial listings across South Wales magistrates' courts, with a large proportion being road traffic offences. This was traced back to the police not correctly using the Single Justice Procedure and a lack of coordination with HMCTS regarding outcome checks on the Common Platform. The result was having an impact on the ineffective trial rate data.

3.40. In response, targeted training was delivered to police officers to improve file quality and HMCTS introduced an ad hoc case management court to reduce unnecessary trial referrals to CPS. These measures are being closely monitored and have highlighted how data can reveal systemic issues and lead to collaborative improvements in casework quality and court efficiency.

3.41. Relationships with the judiciary were strong and productive, with strategic and operational meetings leading to tangible improvements in casework, training

and advocacy. To address judicial concerns, the Crown Court team received targeted training on indictment drafting, supported by practical resources, which the judiciary told us led to noticeable improvements.

3.42. District Judges raised an issue regarding the impact that a lack of experience was having in the magistrates' courts. The Area worked towards a solution to ease the burden on prosecutors and allow them more time to prepare and effectively engage in case progression.

3.43. Cymru-Wales faces several unique challenges around resourcing that indirectly affect casework quality. The Welsh Language Act 1993 requires equal service for Welsh speakers, though schemes like the Welsh Legal Trainee Scheme help address this. Geographically, Cymru-Wales has limited transport infrastructure, with some court centres only accessible by car and journey times often exceeding two hours.

3.44. The All-Wales model outlined in chapter 7 of this report enables flexible resource deployment across the Area and is broadly supported by staff, though does present cultural and logistical challenges. We heard varying levels of engagement and understanding, and some staff thought that stakeholder relationships were sometimes strained by the lack of local familiarity. However, the concept permits dynamic effective deployment of resource to the varying demands of the organisation.

3.45. The Area demonstrated a strong commitment to innovation and improvement within the criminal justice system, actively engaging in a range of pilots and initiatives that reflect its strategic priorities and operational strengths. With a history of successfully delivering pilots, especially within the Crown Court context and often supported by strong stakeholder relationships such as the CCP's role in the Crown Courts Improvements Group, the Area plays a key role in shaping policy and practice across England and Wales.

3.46. A standout initiative was the digital jury bundles pilot, which replaced traditional paper bundles with a digital solution with the aim of improving courtroom efficiency and accessibility. Swansea Crown Court was selected as a pilot site and early feedback from the judiciary, HMCTS and prosecutors has been positive. Observations suggest enhanced trial experiences for victims and witnesses achieves best evidence and improves casework quality.

3.47. The Area participates in many pilots which affect Crown Court casework. The Crown Court team has continued to perform well, and it is the Area's successful involvement in these pilots which has been a key factor contributing to driving casework quality.

3.48. Given the basis of this inspection was to identify what aspects impact good casework quality there were certain aspects we identified in this inspection which we highlight as good practice. The following specific aspects of good practice we believe clearly contributed to the quality of casework.

3.49.

| Good Practice |
|---|
| <p>3.50. The use of mock trials to increase the capability and experience of magistrates' courts prosecutors, with assessment and assurance by legal managers through feedback and peer-led sessions to reinforce learning. Paragraphs 3.10 and 5.14</p> |
| <p>The Area's local induction programme was introduced in 2023-24 when the Area experienced a high volume of new prosecutors joining. It received national recognition for its structured and tailored approach, which included detailed timetables, mentoring expectations and regular progress reviews. Paragraph 3.19</p> |
| <p>The induction process provided a robust framework to support and equip those joining the CPS to fulfil their roles. Each new starter's timetable varied slightly in accordance with training availability and progress made; this approach enabled consistency of training provided and assurance that required steps for development had been taken. Paragraph 4.21</p> |

4. Legal Leadership and Area Culture

Legal Leadership and Area Culture

Internal Communications

4.1. The Area employs a range of communication methods to deliver key messages. In CPS Cymru-Wales these range from an all-staff Teams call, weekly bulletins, team meetings with local updates, and a Hub on the local intranet. The variety of methods of communication enables managers to convey the Area's direction regarding casework, keeping staff informed on strategic and operational matters.

4.2. All-staff Teams calls were held every four to six weeks. Approximately 30% of the Area's staff attended the calls we observed. The content of calls was helpful, motivating and topical, covering news on recent pilots, the People Survey and commendations. New starters were introduced personally by the Chief Crown Prosecutor (CCP) or Area Business Manager (ABM).

4.3. The all-staff call was supported by other means of communication through the intranet site and smaller team discussions. However, we found that the dissemination of messages was contingent upon the discretion of respective line managers. In our survey, there was generally a positive response to the Area's communication strategy, with 69.6% indicating that the effectiveness of communication had led to improving casework quality¹¹.

4.4. The high-level methods of communication, supplemented through team meetings, is an effective way of embedding key messages. However, a structured approach with greater oversight from senior managers would ensure consistency of messaging. This is particularly important given the geographical spread of the Area and findings regarding the All-Wales model outlined in chapter 7 of this report.

Governance

4.5. Inspectors reviewed documents provided by the Area, including minutes from various panel and board meetings such as Local Scrutiny and Improvement Panels (LSIPs) and Joint Operational Improvement Meetings (JOIMs). Some minutes were incomplete and lacked a clear audit trail for actions arising from lessons learned. In one instance, sections of the meeting template had been left blank. The quality of minutes and the existence and completion of action logs varied significantly, often depending on which organisation or individual was responsible for recording them. The lack of proper record keeping resulted in

¹¹ Survey question: Based on your experience with managers in the Area, how would you assess the effectiveness of communication and its impact on the quality of casework?

actions being given to senior managers in the absence of a proper audit trail to monitor progress.

4.6. Given the high turnover rate of staff in senior and middle management roles, a lack of clear actions, as well as ownership and clarity of agreed actions, weakens the resilience of the organisation and exposes the Area to a degree of risk in the event of key personnel leaving. Although there is a great deal of activity and involvement from the Area's staff in meetings with partners which focus on improving standards and performance, a failure to identify issues and actions is unlikely to add the value anticipated or lead to improvement. This undermines the effectiveness of these groups and, inevitably, will not lead to the desired improvement in casework quality.

4.7. Outside of stakeholder meetings, the governance surrounding the Area's internal improvement processes presented concerns. Operational delivery (OD) staff told us there was no formal mechanism for raising concerns relating to quality. While ad hoc discussions with managers did take place, staff expressed frustration at not receiving feedback or not understanding what actions, if any, were taken as a result. This lack of transparency and follow-through led to a perception that such conversations did not result in recognised improvements.

Training and Development

4.8. Training and development are essential for maintaining high standards of casework. Our HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPSI) staff survey revealed that 83.3% of respondents felt training had led to either some or significant improvement in the quality of their casework¹².

Prosecutors

4.9. The Area had varying methods of training, including targeted training on indictment drafting, mock trials in the magistrates' court unit (MCU) and lawyer development sessions. Staff provided positive feedback on the quality of training, delivered at both national and local level, with face-to-face sessions particularly valued. Staff spoke highly of their colleagues who provide less formal support and informal shadowing opportunities.

4.10. Some prosecutors, particularly in the MCU, felt that whilst they had received a positive local induction, the level of support following this did not provide adequate oversight and they were 'left to get on with it'. Concerns were raised by prosecutors who expressed that the general lack of experience within the

¹² Survey question: What impact has the training provided to frontline legal or non-legal CPS staff had on the quality of casework?

MCU has resulted in newer prosecutors shadowing colleagues in court who are not much more experienced than themselves.

4.11. There is a degree of reliance on informal shadowing for development. This can be an effective method of training, but in instances where there is a lack of experience in those being shadowed, which is compounded by the inexperience of many of the legal managers, it can result in poor practice being passed on. The decline in casework quality that we noted between our baseline assessment and follow-up activity in the MCU indicated that inexperience was a contributory factor in our findings.

4.12. Staff spoke positively about the culture within the MCU, with all prosecutors willing to help and support each other. Whilst the gap of experience within the unit persists, senior managers may wish to consider how to mitigate this with additional development and support.

Legal Managers

4.13. The Area has recently refreshed the Terms of Reference for the Casework Quality Board (CQB) (discussed in chapter 8) and introduced the Legal Leadership Forum (LLF) to replace Legal Managers' Workshop days.

4.14. Senior District Crown Prosecutors (SDCPs) (senior legal managers) and District Crown Prosecutors (DCPs) (legal managers) explained that historically there has been limited formal training for legal managers. The introduction of the monthly LLF provides regular structured training and peer learning for all legal managers. DCPs and SDCPs report strong peer networks and senior support and find the legal leadership forum helpful to their development. There is an emphasis on developing internal talent through a 'grow your own' approach.

4.15. The LLF is an effective way of equipping legal managers with legal knowledge and ensuring consistency of training across units to address needs identified by the Area. The emphasis of the LLF is on legal knowledge and issues. Whilst there may be ad hoc and individual support, legal managers told us there was no structured supplemental support for them with other elements of their role, including the interpretation and analysis of data,

4.16. DCPs raised concerns about the induction processes that were in place to support them on promotion. Although the Area had developed an induction plan outlining managerial responsibilities and identifying key personnel to offer support, the plan was either not followed or not recognised as part of a formal training pathway. This may be due to the high number of staff on temporary promotion, which can disrupt the delivery of structured development and dilute effectiveness.

4.17. DCPs explained that they would rely on peer support to gain skills and knowledge, rather than receiving structured guidance from senior managers. In the absence of formal mentoring and managerial oversight, this risks the development of inconsistent or poor practices.

Induction

4.18. The CPS induction includes training provided by the Central Legal Training Team (CLTT) and the Area to new prosecutors. The Lawyer Induction Programme (LIP) is a national programme delivered by the CLTT and provides classroom, courtroom and online training to supplement the training that new starters receive from the Area. The LIP takes three months to complete, with modules taking place at set intervals to enable new prosecutors to practice the skills they have learned on the LIP in their role in Area.

4.19. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) recruits Crown Prosecutors (CPs) and Senior Crown Prosecutors (SCPs) with both criminal and non-criminal legal backgrounds. For those without a background in criminal law, an additional foundation module is provided by CLTT as part of the LIP.

4.20. In 2023-24 the Area experienced a high volume of new lawyers joining the Area within a six-month period. A detailed induction plan was devised which introduced the new starters to the Area and set out expectations and responsibilities of the role with written information and guidance of common offences and relevant case law. A tailored timetable for each new starter was developed which clearly set out on a week-by-week basis the training, shadowing and other work to be carried out, with progress being regularly reviewed between the new starter and a dedicated induction DCP. A mentor expectation document was also produced so that it was clear what was expected of those acting as mentors to new starters.

4.21. The induction process, when followed, provided a robust framework to support and equip those joining the CPS in the fulfilment of their roles. Each new starter's timetable varied slightly in accordance with training availability and progress made; this approach enabled consistency of training provision and assurance that required steps for development had been taken. This was good practice.

4.22. The Area received national recognition for the local induction programme. The DCP who developed this plan and managed the induction team won a Staff Award for Excellence under the category "Supporting our People". Due to resourcing, at the time of our inspection a dedicated induction team was no longer in place, although more recently this has been reinstated as the Area is recruiting larger numbers of new lawyers. However, the original induction framework as described above was still used for new starters joining the Area in individual teams.

We received mixed feedback on its delivery with some voicing concerns about consistency.

4.23. A detailed, structured and consistent approach to induction will assist in driving up casework quality. It ensures that new starters are adequately supported when joining the CPS and have a clear programme of training and development.

Bespoke programmes

4.24. The judiciary highlighted issues with the drafting of indictments within the Crown Court team (CCT). Training was provided to the unit and a 'crib sheet' created to provide model examples and give hints and tips on drafting. Prosecutors confirmed they had found this training helpful. Feedback from the judiciary demonstrated an improvement in the quality of the indictments. Although improvement was prompted by judicial comment, it demonstrated the Area's commitment to addressing feedback and ability to swiftly develop training to address concerns and drive casework quality.

4.25. The Area also began lawyer development sessions in the MCU. These were monthly 30-minute sessions delivered by SDCPs and Deputy Chief Crown Prosecutors (DCCPs) which focused on specific areas for development. The contents of the sessions were led by performance data and any issues that may have been identified by lawyers. The same session was repeated three times per month, aimed at reaching the majority of the prosecutors within the unit. The session was also recorded and so can be accessed outside of the scheduled sessions. Lawyers reported that they found these targeted, bitesize training sessions helpful, particularly as they are tailored to current key messages and issues in the unit and that they are accessible. No clear evaluation of the impact of this training on casework quality appears to have been undertaken in accordance with good governance.

4.26. The Area identified through its Individual Quality Assessments (IQAs) that the public interest stage of the Code for Crown Prosecutors ('the Code') was not being adequately considered within charging decisions and other reviews. In response, DCPs focused on this issue during training sessions and with IQAs. Following this process, DCPs saw an improvement with the application of the Code and the public interest stage was being referred to in more detail within reviews. This reflects a proactive approach by the Area to addressing a weakness and improving casework quality.

4.27. There was evidence of a close working relationship between Crown Court legal managers who have implemented new initiatives to keep staff motivated, engaged with their work and encouraging a team ethos. Several staff spoke highly of a Crown Court team away day. The event was organised as it was considered that some lawyers, particularly those not attending court regularly, can lose sight

of broader outcomes. The event not only encouraged team building but reinvigorated and reminded lawyers of the importance of their work and the impact that it has on the wider criminal justice system and victims of crime, helping to improve their experience.

Operational Delivery

4.28. Operational delivery (OD) staff in CPS Cymru-Wales have an induction process which included reliance on shadowing other team members. The training provided to OD staff in the Area was adequate and staff said they felt equipped to do their jobs. All staff were required to be fully conversant with the Case Management System (CMS) and redaction training.

4.29. As with the rest of the CPS, staff are unable to register for the training until they commence employment with the CPS. Once employed, there were examples of OD staff waiting over four weeks to receive training (and up to nine weeks for redaction training, which is required to do bundling), during which time they could only carry out limited meaningful work. Although the issue was not limited to CPS Cymru-Wales as it is a national programme requirement, it was likely to impact local casework quality because during the time team members are waiting for their training, the team appeared to be 'fully staffed' but resources cannot be fully utilised. This has an impact on productivity. Once trained on CMS, staff explained there was little by way of other formal training. Almost all staff said they would approach an experienced peer for training and advice rather than managers, which can lead to inconsistencies in approach.

Individual Learning Accounts

4.30. Individual Learning Accounts (ILA) were promoted but are used inconsistently. Senior managers acknowledged staff do not utilise their ILA as much as they could. Both lawyers and OD staff shared concerns with the lack of time available to do the courses they wanted to do, despite encouragement from management.

Motivation and support

4.31. Senior leaders from both OD and legal teams were seen in various offices across the Area during the three weeks we were on site. Interviews with staff confirmed that senior management were visible and approachable. The CCP attends each of the three offices on a regular basis and makes a point of 'walking the shop floor'. Despite the high level of visibility and sustained support from senior leadership, opinions on the visibility of first and second line legal managers was mixed. In our interviews, we heard that some staff in the south of the Area felt excluded from messaging around issues such as training and rotas. Some managers were visible and engaged regularly with staff through team meetings and

one-to-one sessions, but this was not consistent. Where regular one-to-ones and meetings took place, they fostered trust and clarity.

4.32. However, throughout interviews with managers and focus groups, the overall sentiment was that managers were held in high regard. A number of lawyers commented on how much they welcomed the open-door policy adopted by some managers, including those in the senior leadership team. With such high levels of approachability, we were able to see a strong willingness to discuss cases and an eagerness to learn from these discussions to improve casework quality.

Victim Liaison Unit

4.33. The Victim Liaison Unit (VLU) serves as the organisation's primary point of contact for victims under both the Victim Communication and Liaison (VCL) scheme and the Victims' Right to Review (VRR). At the time of the inspection, the VLU was undergoing a period of transition following the departure of a long-serving and highly respected team leader.

4.34. The Area had plans in place to replace the unit manager, but these were superseded due to other staffing issues. Notwithstanding the Area plans, the absence of interim leadership while the staffing issue was dealt with, highlights a broader issue of limited organisational resilience within the unit. In addition to these structural concerns, VLU staff reported feeling on the fringes of the wider organisation. Although standing invitations exist for the Head of VLU to participate in key strategic meetings, these opportunities had not been taken up since the departure of the substantive postholder. We were told that this has recently changed with the manager now attending key strategic meetings.

Legal and Operational Delivery relationship

4.35. As we set out in our Area inspection report of CPS Yorkshire and Humberside¹³, although legal and OD teams have distinct roles, effective collaboration is essential to ensure high-quality casework. Mutual understanding of each team's processes, priorities, and expectations is key to working efficiently and resolving issues promptly. This is clearly embedded in Cymru-Wales at the most senior level with a strong collaborative relationship evidenced between the CCP and the ABM. However, this was not consistent throughout the Area.

4.36. A recurring concern highlighted in interviews was the lack of communication between legal and OD teams. OD staff often feel excluded from strategic discussions, with meetings typically attended by only one team. This limited the consistent delivery of key messages. Poor communication and

¹³ [Area Inspection Programme Phase 3 – CPS Yorkshire and Humberside, HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate, 30 September 2025](#)

collaboration between the two teams directly impacted casework quality and operational efficiency.

4.37. Physical separation, such as teams working on different floors in Mold, compounded the disconnect. Similar issues of physical separation existed in Cardiff until recent changes to co-locate staff. Limited office attendance since the Covid-19 pandemic has hindered informal learning opportunities, especially for new staff who miss out on learning through overheard conversations and spontaneous interactions. Senior leaders recognise the challenges presented by remote working and physical separation of teams and are working towards better integration.

4.38. OD staff reported delays in progressing cases due to lawyers not completing tasks in the CMS. These delays affected OD performance metrics and case progression. Improved communication and workflow alignment would help to resolve such issues. A positive example was shared where an OD staff member collaborated directly with a lawyer resulting in a successful conviction. However, this was attributed to an existing relationship, highlighting the need for broader cultural change.

4.39. Despite the simplicity of some issues, feedback to improve performance appeared ineffective. Previously, new prosecutors shadowed OD staff for two weeks to build understanding and relationships, but this has stopped due to casework pressures. Reintroducing this practice could improve collaboration and ensure lawyers better understand OD roles and dependencies with a consequent positive impact on casework quality.

4.40. There was a disconnect between the concerns raised in our OD focus groups about a perceived divide, and the perception of legal and OD managers who described strong relationships. However, the CCP does recognise both successes and challenges in legal and OD collaboration. A pilot initiative in the Mold office aims to address some of these issues and foster better integration, a development which is expanded upon in the next chapter.

5. Creativity and Innovation

Creativity and Innovation

Pilots

5.1. The Area has a history of developing and delivering pilots. The success of pilots was assisted by the Area's strong stakeholder relationships at senior levels. The Area is proud to be involved in pilots and shaping the future of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and criminal justice system.

5.2. Piloting allows the Area to influence, shape and understand pioneering ideas early. Staff are able to gain a head start towards being proficient with technology or programmes. Pilots also encourage better stakeholder engagement. With the level of inexperience and staff turnover, there is a cost to pilots, however the benefits of governing pilots are clear to see when a pilot is adopted in full and implemented.

5.3. Whilst on site, digital jury bundles were being piloted in Swansea Crown Court, which was one of three national pilot sites. These were a digital solution to replace traditional paper jury bundles and are a significant step towards enhancing efficiency and accessibility in courts. The Area was keen to be part of this pilot in order to influence the work and ensure the digital solution enabled compliance with obligations under the Welsh Language Act 1993. The Area was required to roll out training for its staff and to the external Bar.

5.4. The use of the bundles received positive feedback. Although their use is in their early stages, they were effective at taking a jury through evidence and made efficiencies when updates to the bundle were required. This consequently improved the overall experience of victims and witnesses, which enabled them to give better evidence, driving up casework quality.

5.5. The Area were also due to pilot a refined paralegal role. The pilot aimed to explore how Crown Court teams (CCTs) could better utilise the skills of paralegal officers to support prosecutors in Crown Court cases, clearly defining and embedding roles and responsibilities, fostering joint case ownership to build skills and accountability, improving compliance with processes, and exploring new or revised working methods. This will enable prosecutors to focus on legal decision-making and case strategy. The concept will be piloted initially in Mold from September 2025. As well as allowing more time for lawyers to undertake core legal work, given our findings, we expect this to lead to impact casework quality by improving relationships between OD and legal outlined in chapter 4.

5.6. The Chief Crown Prosecutor (CCP) sits on the Crown Courts Improvements Group, which is an influential role enabling the Area to take advantage of pilots. Those affecting work in the CCT were a common theme and a key factor

contributing to the sustained performance of the team, in between our baseline inspection and subsequent follow-up.

Brigading Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing Courts

5.7. Historically, plea and trial preparation hearings (PTPHs) were scheduled across South Wales with little coordination in timing or location. Judges noted that progress was often slow because counsel frequently struggled to contact lawyers for instructions. In July 2024, the Area negotiated the grouping of PTPHs on Mondays and Fridays in Cardiff Crown Court. This initiative was made possible by deploying a District Crown Prosecutor (DCP) to support proceedings in court.

5.8. Court observations showed the DCP played a key role in reviewing cases in real time, cultivating constructive engagement with the defence and counsel. There was a clear, shared commitment to progressing cases efficiently. The DCP expressed strong support for the initiative.

5.9. The Crown Court Senior Operational Business Manager was actively analysing data to assess the impact of brigaded PTPH courts. The Area was using data to understand the causes of adjournments and to drive performance improvements and operational efficiency. This demonstrates there are pockets of a more structured and forensic approach to actions being taken, but this appears more limited to specific projects. Given the pressures that Crown Courts are facing, it is our view that this initiative will remove cases from the system, improve efficiency and promote progress in existing cases which will improve casework quality.

Welsh Legal Trainee Scheme

5.10. The Area has introduced a succession planning scheme aimed at increasing the numbers of Welsh-speaking prosecutors. This initiative was recognised as a strategically positive step, helping to fill a gap that could have adversely affected casework quality, particularly in terms of evidential robustness and timeliness. We were pleased to observe the scheme in practice during our interview with a member of staff.

Mock trials

5.11. A training need was identified through feedback from District Judges that prosecutors in the magistrates' court would benefit from more trial experience. A mock trial was devised by one of the magistrates' court unit's (MCU's) DCPs who had previously been a Crown Advocate. The DCP liaised with HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) to use a court room for the events and secured police officers to act as witnesses, therefore promoting collaboration and giving all parties a lifelike experience in a safe environment to develop skills.

5.12. Prior to the mock trial, the DCP carried out an individual quality assessment (IQA) of each of the prosecutors taking part and targeted their participation. Each prosecutor taking part was responsible for one element of the trial (for example, opening, cross-examination, an application to dismiss) and would conduct that part of the trial. Senior leaders participated by taking on the role of the judge.

5.13. Following the event, the DCP was able to provide individual feedback to the lawyers and identified positive working and areas for development. Additionally, each lawyer was tasked to develop a 'crib sheet' of the element of the trial that they were responsible for, to be distributed throughout the unit. Lawyer Development Sessions were also being held on the elements of the trial and prosecutors were leading the sessions relevant to their participation in the trial.

5.14. This innovative training event has been well received by prosecutors in the MCU, as well as by police and HMCTS colleagues. A second event has taken place in Swansea, and it is envisaged the event will be rolled out Area-wide on a regular basis.

5.15. Whilst resource intensive, the training provides for good advocacy development as well as reinforcing learning from the event through the prosecutors delivering training themselves on their specified topics. The approach contributes positively to raising the standards of casework quality and reflects a commitment to continuous improvement and is considered to be good practice.

6. Joint Improvement and Engagement

Joint Improvement and Engagement

Senior relationships and stakeholder engagement

6.1. CPS Cymru-Wales's relationships at senior levels across the criminal justice system (CJS) were strong. There was clear evidence a considerable amount of time was spent engaging with stakeholders, and every stakeholder we interviewed spoke highly of the Area's senior managers.

6.2. The community engagement logs showed a significant range of events and community groups, with multiple events each month. The documents indicated a range of forums and oversight boards where meetings were held with police and HM Court and Tribunal Service (HMCTS).

Victims and Witnesses

6.3. Victims and witnesses are at the centre of the CJS. Public prosecutions would not be possible without those who provide valuable evidence for the prosecution to rely on and secure justice. Their bravery and resolve provide the foundation upon which cases are built: it is imperative they are properly supported, their rights promoted and encouraged to participate effectively at all stages of the criminal justice process.

6.4. There was a decline in the quality of CPS Cymru-Wales's handling of victims and witnesses in the magistrates' courts casework between our baseline inspection and follow-up. This included matters such as warning witnesses of trial dates, timely correspondence with witness care units and obtaining appropriate orders at sentencing.

| Quality of handling of victims and witnesses | | | |
|--|----------|-----------|---------------------|
| Magistrates' courts | | | |
| | Baseline | Follow-up | Direction of Travel |
| Cymru-Wales | 70.8% | 56.3% | ▼ (-14.5%) |
| National | 70.3% | 71.3% | ▲ (+1%) |
| Crown Court | | | |
| | Baseline | Follow-up | Direction of Travel |
| Cymru-Wales | 74.1% | 75.5% | ▲ (+1.4%) |
| National | 71.5% | 71.2% | ▶ (-0.3%) |

6.5. Victim and witness attrition rates in Cymru-Wales were and remain high, standing at 9% in the last quarter of 2024-25. The Area Performance Manager (APM) highlighted Cymru-Wales had the fourth highest domestic abuse (DA) caseload nationally, with DA commonly having a disproportionately high attrition rate. DA is discussed further in chapter 8.

6.6. Although, generally, special measures applications had improved, there were instances where applications had not mirrored the request made by the victim/witness on the police form. There were also instances where an application for a Restraining Order had been made in lieu of proceeding to trial. Senior managers accepted some witnesses were not being supported properly as not all relevant applications were being made, and this stems from a need to make often difficult decisions during reviews as well as improving communication with police witness care units.

6.7. The police reported issues with witness summonses or victim care letters. Citizens Advice praised the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) for delivering a high standard of service during a sensitive case where a breakdown in family relations risked undermining witness engagement. The CPS team worked with Citizens Advice to ensure victims and witnesses remained supported and engaged throughout the process. There were also strong initiatives supporting the National Health Service in relation to violence against healthcare workers.

6.8. Victims and witnesses are a key priority under the Cymru-Wales Criminal Justice Boards. However, in view of the levels of witness attrition, our concerns in chapter 4 about the VLU and the comments of senior management above, there remains scope for improvement in this area.

Defence engagement

6.9. Participants in criminal proceedings must comply with the overriding objective to deal with cases justly under the Criminal Procedure Rules (CPR). To achieve this, the CPS should engage with the defence at key stages of proceedings. As we regularly hear in other CPS Areas, defence and prosecutors expressed frustration that there was a lack of engagement between parties. Current arrangements for payment to the defence do not incentivise early engagement. The percentage of cracked and ineffective trials in the magistrates' court due to prosecution reasons in the first quarter of 2025-26 was 28.4%, which was the highest nationally.

6.10. In our interviews with defence practitioners, they indicated that in the Crown Court, prosecutors did not proactively engage with the defence until court hearings. The obligation for engagement falls on all parties and the fact that in many instances the defence are not paid to engage early can have a detrimental

impact on case effectiveness. Unless cases were managed effectively at plea and trial preparation hearings (PTPH), which had improved with the brigading and presence of a District Crown Prosecutor (DCP) at PTPHs, issues and disputes often did not surface until later in the case. Early engagement in accordance with the CPR not only supports effective case progression but is an essential requirement of criminal practice.

Police Engagement

6.11. Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Officers shared strong relationships with CPS Cymru-Wales. The Chief Crown Prosecutor (CCP) met regularly with Chief Constables, with many issues resolved between Deputy Chief Crown Prosecutors (DCCPs) and Assistant Chief Constables (ACCs).

6.12. A strategic priority for the Area over the year was improving the communication with the police, thereby improving the collaborative working relationship. Historically, the primary method of communication between prosecutors and police officers has been electronic rather than direct conversation. The Area has promoted an approach where prosecutors are encouraged to speak with investigators to discuss issues with cases, rather than send a case action plan (CAP), which it was hoped would improve grip on cases. This is positive and aligns with recommendations we made in our joint inspection report on police and prosecution case building published in July 2025¹⁴. Our findings do not support that this strategic direction has been successfully implemented. We received a significant level of negative feedback from both police and prosecutors around poor communication between the organisations from frontline practitioners. The Area may want to carry out assurance work to determine where barriers remain.

6.13. However, the police spoke positively of the excellent support from prosecutors who took personal responsibility for serious and complex cases when they reached critical stages.

Joint Operational Improvement Meetings

6.14. Joint Operational Improvement Meetings (JOIMs) are the main forum for the police and CPS to discuss local operational improvements. We found a disconnect between the effective and strong relationships at strategic levels and the effectiveness of relationships at the operational meetings.

6.15. Police said the available data for JOIMs was limited, out of date and inadequate at providing real time performance management. Data was provided,

¹⁴ [Joint Case Building by the police and Crown Prosecution Service, Criminal Justice Joint Inspection, 10 July 2025](#)

but there was no additional analytical support for attendees to interpret the data and identify issues and actions to address.

6.16. Several forces created their own spreadsheets and matrices and invested time and resource into building dashboards which empowered them to challenge CPS colleagues in meetings.

6.17. For example, North Wales Police sought more detailed information alongside case action plan/triage rejection rates to understand the common themes resulting in case rejection. The CPS could not provide this additional analysis, which the police felt hampered their ability to improve their casework. We were told of an instance where the police were unhelpfully directed to make a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 when data was not forthcoming from the CPS. This undermines the collaborative working relationship required within the police and CPS prosecution team.

6.18. Meetings focused predominantly on the presentation of data, with minimal emphasis on driving operational enhancements or addressing systemic issues. More recently, post May 2025, the Area has started to share analysis of reasons for file quality failures with local forces. Hopefully this will lead to an improvement in police file quality, as it was hard to discern any meaningful improvements to casework quality or impact of any actions taken from examining JOIMs minutes for the previous year prior to the inspection.

Strategic JOIMs

6.19. Sitting across the four local JOIMs is the Strategic JOIM (SJOIM). The group is well represented with senior leaders from respective criminal justice organisations. The two DCCPs and Area Business Manager (ABM) attend on behalf of Area, as well as other senior managers. There is a wealth of information provided but, similarly with the local JOIMs, no clear path to understand how the data presented by each local JOIM is then used to drive casework quality.

6.20. Our findings were confirmed by an Assistant Chief Constable:

“[The] SJOIM meeting has aimed for consistent objectives with local JOIMs, with them reporting on various aspects to identify themes. However, it’s evident that there are challenges, gaps in data, and a lack of visibility, making it difficult to drive improvements.”¹⁵

6.21. Others we spoke to echoed the historical, disjointed approach, with a lack of messaging being disseminated operationally. We were unable to identify examples of clear improvement directly related to the JOIMs in the Area.

¹⁵ Wales Strategic JOIMs 12/07/2024

DGA Compliance

6.22. When prosecutors make a charging decision, they should use the Director's Guidance Assessment (DGA) to assess whether the case file is compliant with the Director's Guidance on Charging (DG6).¹⁶ This includes whether the case file meets the National File Standards. The CPS collate data on DGA and report the extent to which police case files comply with DG6 at force, CPS Area and national level. DGA compliance has steadily improved for CPS Cymru-Wales, and in June 2025, Cymru-Wales ranked top of all CPS areas.

6.23. The Area introduced an early legal consultation initiative from October 2024. The aim was to review police files against DG6 file quality standards, with weekly recording of case assessment and rejection reasons, and to then share the information with the police. The initiative successfully reduced the pre-charge decision (PCD) backlog, which is an example of a targeted and structured approach having an impact.

Training and other initiatives

6.24. A significant amount of work has been undertaken outside of JOIM arrangements. The Area has invested heavily in upskilling the police with several wide-ranging and training workshops and initiatives. These include CAP workshops, domestic abuse hydra (using practical exercises) training and a stalking insight day. The Area has also worked with police to provide training on various aspects of disclosure, including face-to-face training, attending disclosure conferences and producing a video recording on Investigation Management Documents and Disclosure Management Documents.

6.25. The strategic partnership working and training initiatives conducted outside of the formal JOIM framework have made the most significant contribution to enhancing casework standards.

Criminal Justice Boards

6.26. Local Criminal Justice Boards (LCJBs) report on several key performance indicators, which has helped the Area focus on driving improvement. The LCJBs feed into the strategic oversight of the Criminal Justice Board for Wales (CJBfW). The CJBfW has been reshaped to bring four strategic priorities forward. The CCP is co-lead for the Victims and Witnesses strategic priority. Under the priority, each LCJB has held a workshop attended by all partners in order to conduct an end-to-end review of a domestic abuse victim's journey, the responsibility of each agency in that journey and the identification of any gaps, with a view to tackling victim attrition.

¹⁶ [Director's Guidance on Charging, sixth edition, December 2020, incorporating the National File Standard | The Crown Prosecution Service](#)

6.27. The CJBfW also established a domestic abuse performance dashboard to support data-led decision-making across the system along with the Domestic Abuse Oversight Board (DAOB), chaired by the DCCP. The DAOB was in its infancy at the time of inspection, but it demonstrates efforts to drive improvement in a key strategic priority.

Scrutiny Panels

6.28. Local Scrutiny and Involvement Panels (LSIPs) are attended by stakeholders and occasionally victims and contribute to learning and improvements in practice. The two standing LSIPs are Hate Crime and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). The panels sit three times a year with a good range of community group engagement and clear terms of reference.

6.29. The minutes reflected robust discussion, scrutiny and constructive criticism of case studies, but the recording of actions required improvement. Lessons learned did not always have a corresponding action and where they did, they were not necessarily formally followed up. The Area did highlight some matters which have been addressed as a result of LSIPs, but in the absence of proper monitoring and accountability for actions it is hard to gauge the impact work within LSIPs generates.

HM Court and Tribunal Service

6.30. The court and CPS meet quarterly to take a holistic look at performance. The court reported seeing an improvement in casework quality over the last few years. HMCTS use their own data to drive improvement. For example, the number of and reasons for vacated trials are analysed and any themes identified discussed at the quarterly meetings.

6.31. Although relationships with the legal side are positive, there were some concerns raised by operational delivery (OD) staff which negatively impact casework quality. For example, OD found collaboration difficult where unilateral decisions are made, such as putting trials into remand courts. The CPS often allocate Associate Prosecutors (APs) into remand courts and agents for trials. APs' rights of audience are limited, and they are precluded from prosecuting trials which can therefore, understandably, make managing resources particularly challenging.

6.32. Each court office formerly had Case Progression Officers who looked at forthcoming trials to help manage case progression. Due to resource limitations, HMCTS Case Progression Officers are no longer in place. A number of sources told us the previous approach was successful at preventing ineffective trials and the impact has been felt since it ceased. The CPS are still working with HMCTS to find an adequate solution through the HMCTS/CPS quarterly meetings.

6.33. We were told trials would be moved from one Crown Court to another with very little notice. Considerable pressure was placed on OD staff to keep victims and witnesses engaged and updated when this occurred, negatively impacting their experience and consequently the quality of casework. The issue is compounded by the geographical spread of the area as Crown Courts are located significant distances apart, with some limited transport links.

Judiciary

6.34. The Area had strong and effective relationships with the judiciary in both the magistrates' courts and the Crown Court. Resident Judges in the Crown Court spoke highly of the relationship they shared with senior CPS figures. The CCP has regular meetings with the senior judiciary where issues are discussed and addressed. There are also regular quarterly meetings between DCCPs and the resident Judges. The seven lead District Judges sitting across Wales held strategic meetings to identify concerns which were then raised with the CCP during their bi-annual meeting. Judges were also able to approach local DCPs when necessary to raise day to day operational matters.

6.35. There were several examples illustrating how improved liaison between the judiciary in the magistrates' courts and the CPS had positively impacted the quality of casework. Notably, feedback from judges regarding drink driving cases prompted the CPS to organise a targeted lawyer development session. As a result, recurring issues identified in drink driving prosecutions were incorporated into ongoing training agendas. Furthermore, advocacy role-playing sessions were introduced in response to judicial feedback concerning trial presentation, demonstrating a proactive approach to enhancing courtroom advocacy standards.

6.36. We highlighted the brigading of Cardiff PTPH courts in chapter 5. Coupled with that initiative was the resident Judge's desire to secure the attendance of a DCP at the PTPH. This was to promote effective case management by enabling decisions to be made without unnecessary adjournments, such as real-time reviews of basis of pleas and enhanced defence engagement. At Cardiff Crown Court we saw a DCP was able to progress cases quickly and resolve issues in real time without delay which had a positive impact on casework quality.

6.37. Assurance undertaken by the Resident Judge revealed there was an initial increase in the number of guilty pleas being entered at PTPH but there was not a sustained improvement in this. This is something which the Area will want to keep under review and assure themselves of the value for money of this initiative.

Traffic Offences

6.38. At the start of 2025, the Area Performance Manager (APM) identified a sharp rise in trial listings across South Wales Magistrates' Court units (MCUs). Weekly

caseload updates revealed live trials had increased from 462 in December 2024 to 731 by May 2025. Further analysis showed a disproportionate number of road traffic cases. For example, in June 2025, 138 out of 188 trials listed in Swansea Magistrates' Court (73.4%) were related to motoring offences.

6.39. CPS Cymru-Wales found the issue stemmed from police not correctly applying the Single Justice Procedure (SJP). Additionally, there was a breakdown in communication between the police and HMCTS regarding when to check the Common Platform following SJP outcomes. This procedural gap was affecting both CPS performance figures and court efficiency.

6.40. The DCP motoring lead delivered targeted training to police officers to improve file quality. The Area worked with HMCTS who agreed to arrange an ad hoc case management court to test its effectiveness in reducing trial volumes. The initiative demonstrated how the CPS used data to uncover systemic issues and drive cross-agency improvements. By addressing weaknesses in stakeholder processes, CPS Cymru-Wales has taken proactive steps to enhance casework quality and efficiency.

7. Resources

Resources

Budget

7.1. All Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) Areas are aware of the fiscal position across government becoming increasingly challenging. HM Treasury has advised all departments to expect reductions in funding over the next spending review period. At the time of writing, CPS Cymru-Wales had an annual budget of £28,462,064 which represented a £1.33m reduction from the previous financial year.

7.2. An indicative budget is set against the national resourcing model which broadly balances with the funding envelope granted to the CPS as part of the 2021 spending review. Once the Area receives an indicative budget, the Area Finance Manager (AFM) completes a budget return, which is signed off by the Area Business Manager (ABM). This is an opportunity for the Area to provide comments on any errors in the budget data and feedback on the allocated budget.

7.3. The AFM, ABM, head of business centre and Senior Operational Business Manager (SOBM) discuss staff changes which affect budget at the start of each month. This is an important part of the assurance process as the discussions feed into the end of the month meeting with finance business partners based at CPS Headquarters. This ensures that the team at CPS Headquarters are appraised of the current spend, forecast and any particular challenges can be highlighted.

7.4. The Area has demonstrated strong financial stewardship, consistently managing its budget with accuracy. Over the past three years, actual spending has remained within 1% of the allocated budget each year, reflecting effective planning and robust financial controls.

Staffing

Overview

7.5. For the financial year 2024-25, the Area had 305 full time equivalent members of staff split evenly across legal and operational delivery (OD). The rolling year-to-date caseload (June 2025) in the magistrates' court unit (MCU) was 23,789. This represented a 7% increase from this time last year. The Crown Court team (CCT) had seen a 4.8% increase over the same period with 4,191 cases. The average working days lost stood at 7.9 days in quarter one of 2025-26, which was down from 9.6 the same quarter the previous year.

7.6. The live pre-charge decision (PCD) caseload per Senior Crown Prosecutor (SCP) was eight in the MCU and six in the CCT. The live charged caseload per SCP was 64 in the MCU and 76 in the CCT. Trials in Wales tended to be heard and

finalised more expeditiously than in other Areas due to shorter time to trial listings. Consequently, cases largely remained active and did not sit dormant awaiting trial dates.

Recruitment and Retention

7.7. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, the Area has encountered considerable resourcing challenges, particularly within its senior leadership cadre following the retirement of two Deputy Chief Crown Prosecutors (DCCPs). Currently, three substantive Senior District Crown Prosecutors (SDCPs) have been promoted to DCCP roles (one of whom to another Area). The backfilling of the SDCP positions was temporary, as was the situation within the District Crown Prosecutor (DCP) cadre, where three individuals were serving on temporary promotion. The pandemic also created new home-working opportunities for staff to take up roles outside Wales, particularly in CPS Headquarters, which had not previously been accessible. This shift contributed further to the loss of experienced personnel.

7.8. The Area was acutely aware of the operational impact of staff turnover and recruitment from non-criminal backgrounds and has faced other significant staffing challenges, particularly with paralegal roles. Improvements have been made, and succession planning is in place via the Business Delivery Board. The ABM indicated that the Area is seeking to be proactive by looking ahead to identify talent or gaps in the business.

7.9. The Area was given an increase of 41.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions across legal and operational delivery. Managing the uplift in resources to effectively support the transitions and address the challenges was a significant task which continued at the time of our inspection. The Area was due to take on 31 new starters in July, August and September 2025. Staff feedback on recent recruitment campaigns was generally positive, with a consensus that the Area was now better resourced. However, concerns remained regarding the high levels of inexperience, especially within the legal manager cadre, which may have an impact on casework quality.

7.10. The Area and People Board minutes reflected a clear and proactive approach to addressing staff retention challenges. There was clear evidence of genuine efforts to understand the underlying causes of staff demotivation, with emphasis placed on early intervention strategies. This included conversations around career aspirations and the benefits of working for the CPS as well as exit questionnaires. The structured support provided to managers ensured staff interactions were meaningful and constructive, contributing positively to morale and retention outcomes.

Experience

7.11. The Chief Crown Prosecutor (CCP), DCCPs and ABM met regularly to discuss the allocation of resources, considering factors such as vacancies, new joiners, leavers, promotions, prosecutors moving to Rape and Serious sexual offences (RASSO) or the Complex Case Unit, caseloads, experience and career development.

7.12. Additional resource meetings took place at senior level between DCCPs and the SDCP. This was a cause of frustration for DCPs who were unable to see data from resourcing dashboard and expressed a desire to have a role in the decision-making process. Although decisions need to be made at senior level, we saw an inconsistency in how information about the decisions made was disseminated to front line managers and staff. This was demonstrated in the OD focus group where they were unaware that ten new starters were about to be recruited and trained by the existing staff. Improved communication would assist in a more collegiate approach.

7.13. The results from our follow-up inspection reflect the fact the Area was forced to move a significant amount of experience from the MCU to the CCT and RASSO teams. In March 2020, 10 of the 14 of DCPs had more than three years' experience; this had declined to 6.5 of 17.5 DCPs at the time of our inspection. A third of the Area's DCPs had less than 18 months' experience. DCPs are required to provide legal support and oversight to prosecutors therefore this lack of experience has an impact on casework quality and ensuring that strong prosecutorial decisions are being made consistently.

7.14. The relative inexperience of managers also impacts the effectiveness of DCPs attending Joint Operational Improvement Meetings (JOIMs) as they are unfamiliar with data analysis so not fully equipped to drive performance.

7.15. Temporary promotions have been utilised as a mechanism to provide aspiring managers with experience prior to permanent appointment. While this approach has offered some developmental benefits, it has not fully addressed the underlying capability gaps. Senior managers have acknowledged that existing skill gaps have had a detrimental impact on the quality of casework. In addition, we were also told of performance issues within the unit that have not been tackled effectively by managers. A key contributing factor is the lack of confidence among managers in applying performance management processes which the Area might seek to consider.

7.16. In March 2024, 18 of the 21 of Crown Prosecutors (CPs) had been in post for less than 18 months. The Area also acknowledged a significant number of CPs joined with no criminal experience at all, which required additional investment in their development. District Judges raised concerns about the impact the lack of

experience had in the magistrates' courts. The Area worked towards a solution with HM Court and Tribunal Service (HMCTS) to allow prosecutors more time to prepare and effectively engage in case progression. As well as upskilling lawyers with mock advocacy training, local judges told us the quality of advocacy has improved significantly since concerns were raised.

Rotation

7.17. The Area had recently implemented a scheme whereby prosecutors in the MCU were rotated through three areas of work: advocacy, charging and review. Prosecutors were rotated through teams every four to six months and DCPs rotated every 12 to 18 months.

7.18. This scheme was designed by the Area in March 2023 to enable lawyers to concentrate on one area of work to drive efficiency, as lawyers become skilled in the team they were working on before being rotated to another team. It was anticipated the scheme would drive casework quality by enabling lawyers to focus on specific areas, hone and develop skills and allow the prioritisation of work more effectively.

7.19. Feedback from DCPs suggested the rotation system is not consistently applied. Some DCPs reported feeling 'trapped' in their current roles, with limited opportunities to rotate or develop in other areas. This lack of mobility can hinder professional growth and negatively affect morale.

7.20. No rotation exists in the Cown Court team. Cases were handled from cradle to grave, although support was sometimes drawn from the pool of Crown Advocates (CAs) to assist. This enables the Area to deal with serious casework but also gives flexibility to move lawyers around when the need arises.

Use of External Counsel, Agents and Overtime

7.21. Overtime was used consistently in the Area. It had to be authorised by the ABM and tended to be used at weekends as a response to demands, such as spikes in pre-charge decisions (PCDs). We heard concerns expressed in relation to the experience of those taking up overtime and completing tasks with which they may not be overly familiar. The Area will want to assure themselves that there is suitable overtime supervision.

7.22. Similarly, OD overtime was aimed at dealing with immediate pressures and not a mechanism to improve casework quality. Many expressed the view there was an over-reliance on agents, resulting in pressures on OD by increasing their workload as they must undertake different processes to produce casework packages which was more time consuming.

7.23. Agents tend to be used for trials which releases time for prosecutors to conduct first hearings. However, this is at the cost of giving them trial experience, which might assist trial strategy in the longer term, therefore improving casework quality.

7.24. External Counsel are routinely used in the Crown Court. The Area does have a cadre of CAs who carry out Crown Court advocacy and we heard that the CAs are generally well-regarded by the judiciary.

Challenges for Wales

7.25. The issues outlined below do not necessarily have a direct impact on casework quality. However, it is important to acknowledge certain challenges specific to CPS Cymru-Wales have wider implications on other aspects of the business which do have a direct bearing on casework quality.

7.26. Under the Welsh Language Act 1993, the Area is under a duty to provide an equal service to Welsh speakers. This must be considered when recruiting, particularly in North Wales. The Area has sought to mitigate this through the Welsh Legal Trainee Scheme and worked closely with CPS Headquarters to secure additional funding.

7.27. CPS Cymru-Wales has unique logistical challenges associated with traversing the country. Senior management frequently travel between offices, and the difficulties are particularly pronounced due to limited transport infrastructure. For example, Mold lacks a rail service, and many court centres outside of Cardiff and Swansea are realistically only accessible by car. This results in significantly extended journey times often exceeding three hours, which must be carefully considered when planning rotas. Travel time represents a substantial operational cost and directly impacts lawyers' ability to prepare adequately for court.

All-Wales Model

7.28. The geography of Wales has contributed to the Area implementing the 'All-Wales' model. Previously the Area had local approaches to casework delivery. The All-Wales model allowed resources to move around teams more readily which enables the Area to build resilience across the business giving flexibility to resourcing, contributing to casework quality.

7.29. The MCU and CCT teams worked across Wales. The CCT had teams in each of the three offices. They largely undertake cases from the local police force area but also worked across Cymru-Wales to manage the Area's demands. This appears to be a response to resourcing issues and overall, the feedback from staff was positive. The model enabled managers to make dynamic resourcing decisions as demand dictated.

7.30. However, such an approach also necessarily impacted stakeholder relationships. There was a lack of physical proximity or understanding of local issues between CPS staff, police forces and courts dealing with any one case. For example, we were told of a collegiate environment between Defence, court and CPS in North Wales, however, this was not a sentiment shared in the south.

7.31. While this reflected operational flexibility, senior managers acknowledged that there remained a degree of reluctance amongst some staff to fully embrace the All-Wales model and a need to engage with them to achieve wider acceptance.

8. Assurance

Assurance

Performance management and data

Data

8.1. Performance data is a key tool for monitoring and improving casework. Regular data analysis gives an indication to senior managers as to casework issues requiring improvement and can be used to influence resource allocation. When contextualised and explained, this data can motivate staff and help them understand their contribution to the organisation's goals. However, we found some inconsistencies in the Area's use and understanding of data, with staff feeling that the data received lacked relevance to their role.

8.2. Legal managers shared key performance indicators (KPIs) with their team to demonstrate where improvements have been made and to subsequently raise morale on the team. Where the data showed improvements were required, this was used to provide targeted support to individuals or teams, either through identified development needs or resource. Where prosecutors could see how performance data was relevant to the work that they were undertaking, such as the number of cases that were discontinued after three or more court hearings, they found it helpful.

8.3. However, one senior manager said the responsibility lay with District Crown Prosecutors (DCPs) to understand data provided to them. However, they did not elaborate on what steps had been taken to ensure DCPs fully understand the importance of data and how to use it effectively in their roles. We were told by some DCPs that this posed a particular difficulty for them when attending Joint Operational Improvement Meetings (JOIMs) as they did not feel fully equipped to analyse data.

8.4. There was an inconsistent approach as to how managers shared data with their teams. Further assurance from senior managers may be required to ensure consistent messaging and a clear focus on performance. This would help reinforce the effective use of performance data as a tool to drive improvements in casework quality.

8.5. Regular strategic meetings at a senior level considered key performance areas such as charging decisions, early legal consultations, court compliance and Custody Time Limit (CTL) monitoring. This ensured regular assurance and oversight at a senior level. Where data may highlight areas of concern, a strategy for improvement of those areas could be developed.

8.6. Operational delivery (OD) staff did not always find the data provided to them relevant or helpful. We heard that whilst some staff may be provided with data, they did not feel it related to their day-to-day work and so they did not take much notice of it. Some further context and analysis around the data shared may assist staff in understanding the interplay between legal and OD and the importance of their roles in the overall aims and objectives of the organisation, in turn encouraging more cohesive working practices and driving casework quality.

Management

8.7. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) deals with performance issues on either an informal or formal basis, with this likely depending on the significance of the issue, ability to improve and longevity of the concern. Poor performance impacts the quality of casework if there are issues regarding legal decision-making or how cases are managed. Additionally, poor performance can result in the lawyer whose performance is an issue having heightened stress or reduced morale if they feel that they are unable to perform effectively. Furthermore, where there is poor performance within a team, other team members may be required to pick up additional work or provide higher than usual levels of support, impacting on their ability to produce high-quality casework.

8.8. It has been recognised by senior management that there has been a lack of confidence from DCPs to use formal performance management methods, particularly in the magistrates' court unit (MCU). This could be as a result of the already-noted levels of inexperience within the DCP cadre although the Area does provide support and training for managers through a programme of sessions with the human resources advisory manager.. We were told that the Area plans to work with DCPs to increase their confidence in this aspect.

Quality Assurance

Individual Quality Assessment

8.9. We examined nine Individual Quality Assessments (IQAs) which had all been dip sampled by a Senior District Crown Prosecutor (SDCP). The use of IQAs was not consistent across the Area with some missing basic points and DCPs being too lenient where there were omissions. This raised concerns about the reliability of the process and its ability to identify and address issues effectively.

8.10. Prosecutors suggested that IQAs were often perceived as procedural tasks rather than meaningful development tools. This perception limited their impact, as feedback was not always followed up with reflective or constructive conversations. As a result, opportunities for learning and improvement were missed.

8.11. Additionally, not all casework conversations were formally recorded. This lack of documentation presented a risk to quality assurance and reduced

accountability, particularly when decisions or feedback were not traceable. There was limited evidence we saw that the way IQAs have been conducted was driving casework quality improvement.

8.12. In recognition of this, the Area has developed their own IQA process. The new process entails the DCP identifying an appropriate case to assess and informing the relevant lawyer of this prior to any assessment. Both then have a chance to consider the case separately, but the IQA is not completed by the DCP at that time. There is then a one-to-one meeting between the DCP and the lawyer where the IQA questions are discussed and the form is completed together. Standard-setting training delivered by an SDCP has helped inexperienced DCPs conduct assessments. The process is seen very much as a learning tool by all concerned and aligns with our recommendation in the IQA inspection we published in February 2025¹⁷.

8.13. In addition, this system means the DCP need not assess the case and then have a conversation later with the lawyer as this can be completed during the one-to-one when the form is completed. Formal assurance of the impact of this approach is yet to be carried out.

Local Case Management Panels

8.14. Local Case Management Panels (LCMPs) were conducted by Area on complex or sensitive cases. We saw records of LCMPs where there was clear senior management oversight of the whole range of casework issues to ensure cases were progressed appropriately and quality maintained. This included oversight of charge selection, trial strategy, selection of counsel and media handling.

8.15. The level of senior oversight ensured that cases were handled appropriately and provided support to the prosecutor who had ownership of the case, whilst also developing their skills. However, as the criteria for an LCMP was specific to high risk or highly sensitive cases, the benefits do not extend to general volume crime cases.

8.16. However, other case management panels or case management discussions were carried out on cases not ordinarily meeting the LCMP criteria. Some of these have been thematic and driven by managers. For example, there was a concern that evidence-led prosecutions (particularly within the domestic abuse context) were not being dealt with robustly enough and there was a view amongst prosecutors the court would not deal with them.

¹⁷ [Individual Quality Assessment: An inspection of how the CPS uses IQA to monitor and improve casework quality. HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate, 27 February 2025](#)

8.17. A number of case management panels were carried out with a focus on evidence-led prosecutions as a way of providing guidance as to how the cases could be built and strengthened, so that in the future prosecutors will feel more confident in dealing with them and presenting them at court. Cases that may require a case management panel or discussion may also be identified from the CTL reports if an issue has been noted.

8.18. DCCPs and SDCPs who led LCMPs were keen to create and foster a culture where case discussions with senior managers were welcomed and that prosecutors were willing to discuss cases, rather than feel such discussions were had when cases are going wrong. Inexperienced DCPs and prosecutors found discussions helpful at this level to aid their learning. This will drive casework quality by providing senior oversight to cases, developing DCPs to have confident casework discussions and enable lawyers to hone their skills through discussions with more experienced members of the units.

8.19. However, it also appeared that these panels or discussions were not routinely recorded and may involve a discussion of a case between a lawyer and senior management rather than a more formal panel process. These conversations will no doubt prove helpful and provide advice and guidance to lawyers, and some assurance to senior managers as to the quality of casework. However, if no formal actions are set to be followed up, or skill gaps noted, the drive to improve casework quality in this way could be diminished if there was no assurance that action required has been taken.

Casework Quality Board

8.20. More recently in the MCU, a Casework Quality Board (CQB) has been established which brings together all magistrates' court DCPs on a monthly basis. The purpose of the CQB is to improve the quality of casework decision-making, case strategy, preparation, progression and advocacy presentation.

8.21. These boards allow senior managers to ensure that approaches to working are being shared, taken away and distributed to the teams. The boards have a different focus every month and the messaging is assured through targeted IQAs. An example were IQAs conducted on domestic abuse cases with an evidence-led focus, following this being the theme of a CQB.

8.22. The Area also identified that cases with statutory time limits (STL) were being submitted late by police for charging decisions. The CQB recognised the issue, and the Area has since appointed a dedicated charging lawyer to handle STL cases.

Priority Casework

Custody Time Limits

8.23. Systems are in place for CTL monitoring, including weekly assurance checks and escalation protocols. Figures for August 2025 show the Area had 528 CTL cases, which represented around 8.6% of the caseload. In the MCU it was 2.1% and in the CCT 17.4%. This stood well above the national average, which was 5.7% of total cases having a CTL, with 1.1% in the magistrates' courts and 11.1% in the Crown Court.

8.24. High-risk case logs and LCMPs were used for sensitive cases. However, one CTL failure occurred in the MCU which had been linked to inexperience and a change in case ownership with the rotation of prosecutors. Following this, the process was changed and lawyers in the MCU now retain their CTL cases when rotating teams, allowing there to be ownership and consistency of custody case handling. It was too early for us to be able to assess whether this had obviated or reduced the risk of CTL failures in magistrates' courts casework.

8.25. Basic procedural errors, such as failing to announce CTLs in court, were observed in our examination of CTL cases. During court observations we saw a number of examples where the CTL process was not followed and CTLs were not "agreed and announced". In one example, the CTL was neither agreed nor announced, yet it was recorded on the hearing record sheet (HRS) as having occurred. The most common issue was that CTLs were announced in open court but had not been agreed with the defence and court. However, apart from one case, we found CTL processes were followed in terms of appropriate reviews, CTL progression logs updated, and appropriate checks undertaken.

Hate Crime and Domestic Abuse

8.26. The Area has a Hate Crime Coordinator who undertakes monthly assurance checks and provides face-to-face feedback with prosecutors where possible. They submit monthly reports to senior managers and present lawyer development sessions. As a result, the Area has seen an increase in sentencing uplifts.

8.27. Domestic abuse (DA) is identified as a key priority in Wales with attrition rates being closely monitored. This has led to the Area and the police developing close working relationships in the specialist DA file preparation unit, which is generating efficiency in advice work and engagement with victims. The Area believes that this will improve casework quality.

8.28. Domestic Abuse Attrition Workshops, driven by strategic JOIMs, have identified steps to reduce victim attrition, such as considering the feasibility of independent domestic violence advisors attending court to support victims

alongside Witness Services, and creating a visual map which explains to the victim each step of their criminal justice journey.

Annex A

Inspection framework

Area Inspection Programme (AIP) - Phase 3 Inspection Framework

Introduction

The first phase of the Area Inspection Programme (AIP) 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

CPS Cymru-Wales

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

| Added value | | | | |
|---------------------|-------|-------|---|--------|
| Magistrates' courts | 64.9% | 56.5% | ▼ | -8.4pp |
| Crown Court | 65.5% | 70.7% | ▲ | +5.2pp |
| Grip | | | | |
| Magistrates' courts | 66.2% | 60.0% | ▼ | -6.2pp |
| Crown Court | 76.8% | 75.6% | ▼ | -1.2pp |

National CPS 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% | ▼ |

CPS Cymru-Wales - Themes

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

| Theme | Magistrates' courts | | | | Crown Court | | | |
|--|---------------------|-------|-----|---------|-------------|-------|---|---------|
| Pre-charge | | | | | | | | |
| Code compliance | 100% | 97.3% | ▼ | -2.7pp | 91.7% | 100% | ▲ | +8.3pp |
| Charge selection | 89.6% | 88.5% | ▼ | -1.1pp | 84.7% | 91.1% | ▲ | +6.4pp |
| Case analysis | 43.9% | 33.1% | ▼ | -10.8pp | 38.9% | 50.0% | ▲ | +11.1pp |
| Post-charge | | | | | | | | |
| Code compliance | 100% | 100% | ▶ | 0pp | 95.0% | 100% | ▲ | +5.0pp |
| Case analysis | 58.0% | 54.7% | ▼ | -3.3pp | 60.0% | 70.2% | ▲ | +10.2pp |
| Victims and Witnesses | | | | | | | | |
| Victim and Witness issues | 70.8% | 56.3% | ▼ | -14.5pp | 74.1% | 75.5% | ▲ | +1.4pp |
| Other aspects | | | | | | | | |
| Disclosure compliance | 65.9% | 51.4% | ▼ | -14.5pp | 70.7% | 71.0% | ▶ | +0.3pp |
| Plea and Trial Preparation Hearings (PTPH) preparation | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | 71.2% | 63.9% | ▼ | -7.3pp |

Annex C

Glossary

Area

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) 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 ('the Code') and must take instructions from the CPS.

Area Business Manager (ABM)

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.

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.

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 (CMS) receives electronic case material that has replaced paper files.

Case Strategy Principles (CSPs)

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 (CQSs)

Issued by the Director of Public Prosecutions, these casework quality standards (CQSs) 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 (DG6), which came into effect in December 2020.

Chief Crown Prosecutor (CCP)

Each of the 14 CPS Areas has a Chief Crown Prosecutor (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.

Common Platform

A digital system that allows the police, judiciary, solicitors, barristers and criminal justice agencies to access and edit case information. Operated by HMCTS.

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

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

Crown Advocate (CA)

A Crown Advocate (CA) is a lawyer employed by the Crown Prosecution Service 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.

Crown Prosecutor

A lawyer employed by the CPS whose role includes reviewing and preparing cases for court and prosecuting cases at the magistrates' courts. Crown Prosecutors (CPs) can progress to become Senior Crown Prosecutors.

Custody Time Limit (CTL)

The Custody Time Limit (CTL) is 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 custody time limit failure (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.

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.

District Crown Prosecutor (DCP)

A District Crown Prosecutor (DCP) is 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.

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 (GFS)

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 Graduated Fee Scheme (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.

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 (HRS)

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.

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

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

Individual quality assessment

An individual quality assessment (IQA) is 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, His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (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. Local Criminal Justice Boards 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 Manual of Guidance Form 3 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.

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 Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (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.

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.

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 Victim Personal Statement into account, along with all the other evidence, when deciding on an appropriate sentence.

Victims' Right to Review (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 Victims' Right to Review (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.

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