

HMCPsi Draft Longlist of inspections for the 2027-28 business plan

Carried forward from 2026-27 business plan

In our 2026-27 business plan we set out 15 inspections of the CPS. Nine of those inspections have been progressed and in addition we have worked on a report setting out follow-up inspection activity relating to the National Referral Mechanism inspection.

We have also published two SFO inspections (the use of counsel and a follow-up on our 2023 disclosure inspection) and two by invitation inspections of the Criminal Cases Review Commission and the Military Courts Service.

The following six CPS inspections were not progressed in 2026-27 for the reasons set out.

1. Victims – assessing the universal offer

This inspection has been postponed because of delays in the CPS making a decision on the option it would adopt regarding the universal offer. Undertaking any inspection activity prior to a CPS decision would be premature and have added little value. **This topic will be considered again in the 2028-29 consultation process.**

2. Rape – post-charge legal decision making and case progression

In the 2026-27 business year we have commenced two rape inspections: the service to victims of rape and the follow-up to our 2025 inspection of early advice and pre charge decisions. Both inspection reports will be published in the 2027/28 period. Crown Court case backlogs mean that identifying cases that have been completed under the revised process (Soteria) remains problematic. This would undermine the value that this proposed post-charge inspection would add. **This inspection will be rolled over for consideration in the 2028-29 business planning process**

3. Victims – the bereaved family scheme (BFS)

Undertaking an inspection in 2026-27 would not have added value as the CPS recently reviewed and amended its approach to the BFS (in 2026/27). **This topic will be rolled over for consideration in 2028-29.**

4. The experience of victims in the magistrates' courts

Given other demands in 2026-27 we have not been able to resource this inspection. The inspection will be rolled forward into 2027-28 for consultation. This inspection will involve inspectors attending magistrates'

courts hearings, meeting with the witness service, seeking to speak to victims at the conclusion of their cases, observing trials and a consideration of CPS compliance with the speaking to witness(es) at court scheme. It will also include an assessment of the facilities in the courts, using our powers to inspect HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS)¹, and how they support the delivery of special measures to support victims to give their best evidence. We will consult on these alongside other priorities for 2027-28 inspections of the CPS.

5. How effective is the CPS in delivering a service that meets victims' rights under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime?

The CPS continues to develop its service to victims within its victim transformation programme. As set out above, the universal offer remains to be settled, and the bereaved family scheme is under review. We have carried out several victim-focussed inspections within the 2026-27 period. We plan to evaluate the evidence from those inspections to identify gaps in our inspection activity and develop an inspection within the 2027-28 period that brings together those findings and addresses the work of the CPS in delivering a service that meets the rights of victims and delivers its duties under VCOP. Depending on the outcome of bringing together other findings **we may decide to carry out a general VCOP inspection in 2028-29.**

6. An examination of cases requiring consent to prosecute.

The Law Officers and the CPS have reviewed and revised the consents to prosecute in the 2026/27 period. Given the changes made it was deemed that an inspection of consent cases would not add any value. **A decision has been made to remove this topic from inspection planning.**

Proposals for 2027/28 inspection topics

Crown Prosecution Service inspections

1. Women as defendants

An inspection looking at female defendants, assessing CPS decision making including whether victims are being criminalised. This will include looking at public interest considerations and decisions in cases where female defendants have also been victims. This will exclude modern slavery cases.

2. CPS London

¹ Paragraph 9 of the Schedule to the Crown Prosecution Service Act 2000

An inspection of the effectiveness and efficiency of the CPS in London including stakeholder management with the Metropolitan Police, the City of London Police and Mayor's Office for Police and Crime (MOPAC).

3. An inspection of casework quality in 'so called Honour Based Abuse' cases

Having published a landscape review of CPS work with third sector groups in 2026/27 we indicated that we would undertake an inspection of 'so call honour based abuse' (SCHBA) cases to assess the quality of legal decision making in SCHBA cases.

4. CPS Handling of BTP cases

An inspection into how the West Midlands deals with BTP casework, looking at the effectiveness and efficiency of engagement with BTP, charging, case preparation and engagement with advocates prosecuting BTP cases in the other 13 Areas to ensure they have sufficient material and instructions to be able to prosecute effectively including public safety considerations applicable to bail and custody applications.

5. Instructions to prosecution advocates in the magistrates' courts' on bail and custody

An inspection examining the quality of instructions to advocates on issues relating to bail and custody decisions, applications and appeals. This inspection will consider the detail set out in instructions to court prosecutors at first and subsequent hearings in the magistrates' courts to assess whether sufficient information and material (including information about matters under investigation or on police bail) is provided to ensure advocates are able and equipped to make the appropriate application to protect victims, witnesses and the wider public.

6. Use of AI and other digital tools in casework

An inspection to assess how the CPS uses AI and other digital tools to support the delivery of high-quality casework. This inspection will also look at current innovation and digital readiness.

7. The experience of victims in the magistrates' courts

This inspection will involve inspectors attending magistrates' courts hearings, meeting with the witness service, seeking to speak to victims at the conclusion of their cases, observing trials and a consideration of CPS compliance with the speaking to witness(es) at court scheme. It will also include an assessment of the facilities in the courts, using our powers to inspect HM Courts & Tribunals Service

(HMCTS)², and how they support the delivery of special measures to support victims to give their best evidence.

8. Homophobic crime

This inspection will use the established hate crime inspection methodology used in the racially and religiously aggravated and Crimes Against Older People inspections to examine the effectiveness of the CPS's handling of cases alleging homophobic motivation or perceived motivation.

9. CPS Handling of cases involving children as suspect and defendants

This inspection will examine the CPS's handling of cases involving youth defendants to include application of the CPS's policy, guidance and NPCC's child gravity matrix. It will assess diversion from the court process including out of court disposals.

10. Victim attrition

An inspection that would look at the underlying issues that may result in victim attrition and what the CPS is doing to ensure that effective action is taken to reduce attrition levels. If the inspection is included in the programme a decision will be made on whether the focus will be on magistrates' court or Crown Court cases.

11. The role of the paralegal assistant in supporting victims and witnesses at court

An inspection of how effective paralegals are in ensuring that CPS's standards and expectations about supporting victims and witnesses at court are effectively carried out in every case. This inspection will consider whether the speaking to witness(es) at court scheme is consistently applied and whether victims and witnesses are spoken to in advance of the case and whether they are kept updated throughout the progress of the hearing especially during multi day trials. This inspection could also encompass an assessment of the courts' administration and service to victims including an assessment of the facilities at court (using the powers of inspection of HMCTS). Paralegal officers and paralegal assistants usually support at Crown Court only.

12. Crown Court casework preparation – Part 2 to the PTPH/briefs to counsel inspection

Looking at the effectiveness of the PTPH in trial readiness with a focus on assessing whether issues arise that should have been addressed at PTPH that require significant additional work or that result in a cracked or ineffective trial.

² Paragraph 9 of the Schedule to the Crown Prosecution Service Act 2000

Serious Fraud office inspections

Proposals for inclusion in the 2027-28 programme – one SFO inspection will be conducted in the 2027-28 year

13. Intelligence

An inspection of the effectiveness and efficiency of the use of the intelligence in investigations in the Serious Fraud Office.

14. Digital Forensic Unit (DFU)

An inspection of the effectiveness of DFU in supporting casework, disclosure and LPP decision making.

15. Case progression

An inspection assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of case progression, including compliance with standards and expectations and assessing consistency across divisions.

Follow-up inspections

A number of follow-up inspections will take place in 2027-28 (as resources allow). Follow-up inspections may be conducted on some of the following:

1. Victim Communication Letter (VCL) Follow-up

Given our findings in the inspection report published July 2026 (36.9% letters adequate, in 2020 was 24.1%), we indicate we would follow-up in August 2027 to assess progress. Given the synergy with complaint letters – the follow-up inspection may bring together VCL and complaints.

2. Complaints letter quality inspection follow-up

In our inspection published July 2025 we set out our intention to follow-up in late 2026. The development, implementation and embedding of the new CPS assurance systems remain in progress hence proposing the follow-up in the 2027-28 business plan year. As indicated above the follow-up inspection may bring together VCL and complaints.

3. Custody time limit inspection follow-up

A follow-up inspection of the custody time limit inspection to assess progress against recommendations.

4. Individual Quality Assessment inspection follow-up

A follow-up inspection of individual quality assessment inspection recommendations to assess progress.

5. Follow-up to SFO Use of Counsel

A follow-up inspection of the compliance and impact of changes implemented in response to the report's recommendations.

By invitation inspections (subject to agreeing funding with the inspected organisations)

6. Health and Safety Executive HSE Legal Services Division follow-up

A follow-up inspection to assess progress by HSE LSD to implement recommendations

7. Criminal Cases Review Commission follow-up

A follow-up inspection to assess CCRC progress of implementation of recommendations.