

CPS Lancashire

Overall Performance Assessment

December 2005

Promoting Improvement in Criminal Justice

CONTENTS

	PAGE
A. INTRODUCTION TO THE OVERALL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT PROCESS	2
B. AREA DESCRIPTION AND CASELOAD	3
C. SUMMARY OF JUDGMENTS	4
D. DEFINING ASPECTS	7
1. Pre-charge decision-making	7
2. Managing magistrates' courts cases	10
3. Managing Crown Court cases	13
4. Ensuring successful outcomes	15
5. Handling sensitive cases and hate crimes	17
6. Custody time limits	19
7. Disclosure	21
8. The service to victims and witnesses	23
9. Presenting and progressing cases at court	25
10. Delivering change	27
11. Managing resources	29
12. Managing performance to improve	31
13. Leadership	34
14. Securing community confidence	36
ANNEX A PERFORMANCE DATA	38

A. INTRODUCTION TO THE OVERALL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

This report is the outcome of Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate's (HMCP*SI*) overall assessment of the performance of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in Lancashire and represents a baseline against which improvement will be monitored.

Assessments and judgments have been made by HMCP*SI* based on absolute and comparative assessments of performance. These came from national data; CPS self-assessment; HMCP*SI* assessments; and by assessment under the criteria and indicators of good performance set out in the Overall Performance Assessment (OPA) Framework, which is available to all Areas.

The OPA has been arrived at by rating the Area's performance within each category as either 'Excellent' (level 4), 'Good' (level 3), 'Fair' (level 2) or 'Poor' (level 1) in accordance with the criteria outlined in the Framework.

The inspectorate uses a rule-driven deterministic model for assessment, which is designed to give pre-eminence to the ratings for 'critical' aspects of work as drivers for the final overall performance level. Assessments for the critical aspects are overlaid by ratings in relation to the other defining aspects, in order to arrive at the OPA.

The table at page 6 shows the Area performance in each category.

An OPA is not a full inspection and differs from traditional inspection activity. While it is designed to set out comprehensively the positive aspects of performance and those requiring improvement, it intentionally avoids being a detailed analysis of the processes underpinning performance. That sort of detailed examination will, when necessary, be part of the tailored programme of inspection activity.

B. AREA DESCRIPTION AND CASELOAD

CPS Lancashire serves the area covered by the Lancashire Constabulary. It has offices in Preston, Burnley, Blackpool and Lancaster. The Area Headquarters (Secretariat) is based at a separate office in Preston.

The Area is currently restructuring. Former functional trial units and criminal justice units are being replaced by geographical teams handling cases from the pre-charge decision stage to disposal in either the magistrates' courts or the Crown Court. The Area has three districts: Fylde and North Lancashire District covering Lancaster, Fleetwood and Blackpool Magistrates' Courts and the Crown Court at Lancaster and Preston; East Lancashire District covering Burnley, Blackburn, Accrington, Rossendale and Reedley Magistrates' Courts and the Crown Court at Burnley and Preston; and Preston and South West Lancashire District covering Preston, Leyland, Chorley and Ormskirk Magistrates' Courts and the Crown Court at Preston. In addition, the Area will have two Higher Court Advocate (HCA) units.

During the year 2004-05, the average Area number of staff in post was 229.5 full-time equivalents.

Details of the Area's caseload in the year to March 2005 are as follows:

Category	Area numbers	Area % of total caseload	National % of total caseload
Pre-charge advice to police	16,520	32.6	20.9
Advice	944	1.9	5.1
Summary offences	19,965	39.4	46.9
Either way and indictable only	13,180	26.0	26.7
Other proceedings	53	0.1	0.4
TOTAL	50,662	100%	100%

C. SUMMARY OF JUDGMENTS

The Chief Crown Prosecutor and Area Business Manager both took up their posts in 2004 (in October and February respectively). During the course of the year too, some senior managers left the Area on promotion so that the current Lancashire senior management team is relatively newly constituted, and almost entirely different from the team in place at the time of the inspection (August 2003) and follow-up inspection (March 2004). As some promotions to the senior team were internal, a number of the Area's middle managers are also new to their posts. The Area itself has noted that whilst having an almost completely new management team can have some disadvantages, it also brings the advantage of new and enthusiastic management in the Area.

The Area is now going through a period of positive change. Effective co-operation between all criminal justices agencies, a weakness at the time of the last inspection, has significantly improved and is evidenced by improved performance in a number of aspects of work. The Area has worked effectively with the police to increase the number and value of confiscation orders, and with all criminal justice partners to reduce the proportion of ineffective trials, where performance is improving significantly, particularly in the Crown Court. There has been good liaison with the Courts Service to enable increased use of designated caseworkers , and with all criminal justice partners to establish the Area's first witness care unit.

Lancashire criminal justice area achieved its target for 2004-05 for offences brought to justice (OBTJ) increasing these by 15.5% against the baseline in 2001-02. The target for OBTJ is a shared one set by reference to the criminal justice area. The ability of the CPS to influence this particular target is limited because it includes offences dealt with by non-prosecution disposals. The CPS's contribution comes through managing cases to keep discontinuance and unsuccessful outcomes low, to which CPS Lancashire has successfully contributed, so adding value to the criminal justice process. The Area's performance in reducing unsuccessful outcomes was better than national average performance and the national target, and conviction rates in both the magistrates' and Crown Court are higher than the national average.

Performance in relation to persistent young offenders slipped to 74 days for the three month rolling average to February 2005, with the 71 day target from arrest to sentence not being met. The position has improved, and the Area is operating within target in the early part of 2005-06.

Much work has been done to improve ineffective trial rates, and national targets were met in both the magistrates' courts and the Crown Court.

Statutory pre-charge decision-making has been introduced across the county and performance is regularly managed. There is a high rate of advice being given to police. Most of the anticipated benefits are being realised, though attention needs to be given to subsequent discontinuances of cases subject to pre-charge decisions by the CPS and to those which the CPS determine not to charge.

The management of magistrates' courts and Crown Court cases has been enhanced through case progression. Ineffective trial rates are improving on 2004-05 rates although work still needs to be done to reduce cracked trials.

Sensitive cases and hate crime are on the whole well managed, but further work is needed to ensure that cases involving custody time limits and disclosure are well handled.

The service provided to victims and witnesses is generally good. Letters are sent to victims explaining why charges are dropped or substantially reduced in a relatively high proportion of cases, and in a timely fashion. The first witness care unit has had a very positive impact on increasing witness attendance during its early months of operation.

The Area's management of resources was weaker in some respects than national performance in 2004-05, and senior managers took steps during the year to reduce a large potential overspend, manage the budget better, and to ensure that staff were used more efficiently. Designated caseworker and higher court advocate usage has increased significantly in 2005-06 as a result.

Change has, on the whole, been well managed and there has been a cultural shift towards pro-active performance management.

The Area is undergoing structural change in order to develop teams which handle cases from the pre-charge decision stage to disposal in either the magistrates' courts or Crown Court, and to meet national objectives for effective and increased use of HCAs. Although further work is needed to assess staffing levels and standardise procedures to ensure they are efficient and represent good practice, we are satisfied that the Area will handle this change satisfactorily.

The Area is being well led by the senior team and performance is improving. The Area has embraced fully the need to secure community confidence, and this has been incorporated into the core business of the Area.

In the light of these findings, the Area's overall performance assessment is **GOOD**.

CRITICAL ASPECTS	Level 3 - GOOD
Pre-charge decision-making	3 - Good
Ensuring successful outcomes	3 - Good
Leadership	3 - Good
The service to victims and witnesses	3 - Good
Managing resources	2 - Fair
OTHER DEFINING ASPECTS	
Managing magistrates' courts cases	3 - Good
Managing Crown Court cases	3 - Good
Handling sensitive cases and hate crimes	3 - Good
Custody time limits	2 - Fair
Disclosure	2 - Fair
Presenting and progressing cases at court	2 - Fair
Delivering change	3 - Good
Managing performance to improve	3 - Good
Securing community confidence	3 - Good

OVERALL ASSESSMENT	3 - GOOD
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D. DEFINING ASPECTS

1. PRE-CHARGE DECISION-MAKING

3 - GOOD

Experienced lawyers staff the statutory charging scheme in the Area, and their performance, and the benefits realisation from charging, are closely monitored by senior managers. There is good liaison and performance review with criminal justice partners, and most of the expected benefits are being realised. There remains work to be done on the rate of magistrates' court discontinuances of pre-charge decision cases, on monitoring cases where there is to be no charge, and on the electronic recording of advice.

1A: The Area ensures that procedures for pre-charge decision-making operate effectively at Area charging centres

- Timely pre-charge decisions (PCD) are provided at all relevant Area charging centres. The Area staffs six charging centres on a full time basis and a further two are covered part time by lawyers attending, with telephone coverage or access to another charging centre for the times when there is no duty prosecutor (DP) in those centres.
- All advices and decisions are properly recorded and counted with full use of the Case Management System (CMS). Area systems for monitoring the volume, timeliness and outcome of pre-charge decision (PCD) cases are sound and are used to improve performance and compliance with the scheme. The police systems for providing a reference number and electronic MG3 form are yet to be established, but these are expected to be resolved by January 2006, and in the meantime, the custody reference number is used to track and cross refer cases.
- The level of pre-charge advice is significantly higher than the national average. The Area considers the figure to be accurate and will need to monitor this to check that the scheme is being used appropriately.

Aspects for improvement

- The lack of an electronic MG3 at the charging centre hampers the process of DPs recording their advice at the time. Where they are unable to, the MG3 is sent back to the office to be put onto CMS by typists. Where backlogs occur, as they have done in the past, the typists were instructed to record "see MG3" on CMS in place of the DP's review, and this reduces the effectiveness of CMS as a record of legal decisions on the case. A reality check indicated that this practice is still occurring, despite the reduction of backlogs.

1B: The Area ensures that all charges advised on are in accordance with the Director’s guidance, the Code, charging standards and policy guidelines, and are accurately documented and recorded

- Area lawyers are generally of sufficient experience and expertise to deal with PCD cases and there is widespread understanding of the local and national scheme and all relevant guidance. Early issues with lawyers re-reviewing cases at initial review, or giving conditional charging advice have now been resolved.
- The Area has monitoring systems in place to assure the quality and timeliness of advice and decisions to prosecute, but not when advice is no further action. We discuss this further below. The Area gathers data on all PCD cases, and also monitors any adverse outcomes for these cases. The quarterly district performance meetings include regular discussions of PCD outcomes and processes, with action being taken to address any matters of concern.
- Improvements to the system or guidance on recent developments in practice are circulated to all relevant staff via email or team meetings.
- The Area is piloting conditional cautioning, and there are robust systems in place to monitor outcomes and to chase up progress on these cases.
- There is an embedded system for the police to appeal a decision, including escalation, if need be, to the Chief Crown Prosecutor. The formal system is used rarely, and most issues are resolved informally between the Area and the police through existing channels of liaison or through the regular joint performance meetings.

Aspects for improvement

- Not all categories of case and outcomes are included in the monitoring. In cases where no further action is advised, or where the decision is not to prosecute, the monitoring is left entirely to the police, with the expectation that any issues will be raised with the Area. More could be done to ensure that monitoring encompasses all aspects of the pre-charge decision process.

1C: The Area is able to demonstrate the benefits of its involvement in pre-charge decision-making

- There is effective and regular liaison with the police on the implementation and operation of the scheme, and police compliance with the scheme is generally monitored with referral and action as appropriate. There are regular meetings between managers and their police counterparts to review

the working of PCD and benefits realisation. Where issues have come to light, such as the effectiveness of the police gatekeeper function, these have been addressed in an effective and joined-up manner. Meetings with criminal justice partners on narrowing the justice gap and on the prosecution team performance management also consider PCD cases, and these discussions are informed by up-to-date and relevant data.

- The Area liaises effectively with CPS Direct, particularly through one of the lawyers seconded from the Area. Each Unit has a dedicated electronic mailbox to receive CPS Direct MG3s, and the Area produces specific reports on the cases which have been advised upon by CPS Direct, which are shared with the police.
- On PCD cases, most expected benefits are being realised. The Area's rates compare favourably with national averages for five of the six measures; for the last quarter of 2004-05 Crown Court discontinuances were at 10.7% (nationally 14.6%), guilty pleas were at 71.4% in the magistrates' court (nationally 68.8%) and 72.9% in the Crown Court (66.7% nationally), and attrition rates are better than the national rates in the Crown Court (18.4% as against 23.8%) and the same as national rates (22.7%) in the magistrates' court.

Aspects for improvement

- The rate of discontinuances of PCD cases in the magistrates' court, during the last quarter of 2004-05 stood at 17.8% , against national performance of 16.3% and a national target of 11%. The Area is working to improve its performance and discontinuance rates have shown a steady reduction during the early part of 2005-06.

2. MANAGING MAGISTRATES' COURTS CASES

3 - GOOD

The Area has worked hard to reduce the rate of ineffective trials in conjunction with its criminal justice partners. Case progression is embedded, and cases are prepared promptly, with the case management system (CMS) used both to monitor performance in cases, and to report on wider performance trends. There is good liaison on casework issues with the police and other criminal justice partners. More work remains to be done on cracked trials, persistent young offenders, and the electronic recording of reviews.

2A: The Area ensures that cases progress at each court appearance

- Magistrates' courts cases are routinely reviewed and prepared promptly, with follow-up work undertaken where necessary, and most cases are ready to proceed at each court hearing. The Area has historically had a low rate for early guilty pleas on Narey cases, but is working jointly with the courts and police to effect improvements.
- There is liaison with criminal justice partners, and regular case progression meetings, with performance improving as a result. Case progression officers (CPOs) are established in the criminal justice area, with clear roles set out for the CPOs in the CPS, police and court service, and regular meetings to discuss individual cases and general trends. The Area and the police jointly monitor performance and file quality.
- Preparation and review are monitored through the casework quality assurance scheme, and there is close liaison with police on individual cases to produce file action plans.
- The timeliness of some youth cases is improving; for trials, the timeliness is better than the national average, with 89% of trials being heard within the target period, as against a national average of 87%.
- There have been no wasted costs ordered against the Area.

Aspects for improvement

- The Persistent Young Offender target was not met for the year 2004-05. The three month rolling average to February 2005 was 74 days, whereas the national target is 71 days from arrest to sentence, and the national average was 67 days. The Area, together with criminal justice partners, identified the causes, and worked to address them, and the rate in 2005-06 is back below target at 69 days for the three months from February to April 2005. Timeliness for youth guilty pleas is not as good as the national average (78% as against 87% nationally).

- The Area's performance on timeliness of cases has not been as good as that nationally in some respects. 55% of adult trials were dealt within the target of 143 days compared with 66% nationally. 77% of adult committals were dealt with within 101 days, compared with 89% nationally. Performance in relation to initial guilty pleas for adult cases, was better than national performance, with 86% of cases dealt with within 59 days compared with 83% nationally.

2B: The Area contributes effectively to reducing cracked and ineffective trials

- The Area has worked intensively to reduce ineffective trials and has met national targets. The Area's rate for 2004-05 was 24.4% in the magistrates' courts, where the national target was 24.5%, and national performance was 24.8%.
- There is regular and formal analysis of all ineffective trials, and appropriate action is taken in all cases where the prosecution has been at fault. Where lessons can be learned, these are disseminated via regular reports on district performance, and through team meetings. The district and Area performance reports contain detailed analysis of ineffective trials, and rates are examined regularly at quarterly reviews of district performance and Area management meetings.
- Much of the work on ineffective trials has been undertaken jointly with criminal justice partners, and performance is improving as a result. The various fora, such as the meetings on narrowing the justice gap, court user groups, joint performance with the police, and the Lancashire Criminal Justice Board, all consider ineffective trials as part of their remit, and this monitoring is informed by accurate data.

Aspects for improvement

- The good work done on ineffective trials has not been replicated in the cracked trial rate, and more focus now needs to go into achieving similar results here. Overall, the rate for the Area is 45.9% as against a national rate of 37.1%, and the rates for where the prosecution were at fault are higher than national averages for most aspects.

2C: The Area demonstrates that CMS contributes to the effective management of cases

- CMS is used to record all key events in cases, and outstanding tasks are monitored and chased up where appropriate. CMS usage is monitored, and appropriate action is taken to improve usage. The Area has mapped CMS processes effectively, and usage rates are monitored monthly by the Area Business Manager. The Area's overall rating for CMS usage is better than the national average (80.35% as against 69.19%) and the rate for full file reviews (36.5%) is also over the national rate (27.1%).

- The Area has created a number of CMS/MIS reports and is using them to assist in specific usage and monitoring issues. Local Area templates have been added to the system to assist in performance monitoring.

Aspects for improvement

- Whilst lawyers have a specific objective relating CMS usage, the quality of recording of reviews on CMS could be improved. In a reality check on CMS, 4 out of 10 reviews were insufficiently detailed, and a check on several files seen on site compared to the CMS records also showed that the standard could be improved.

3. MANAGING CROWN COURT CASES**3 - GOOD**

Case progression is effective, there is sound and regular analysis of adverse outcomes and ineffective trials, and liaison with criminal justice partners is established. The number of ineffective trials has reduced significantly since last year as a result. The case management system (CMS) is used effectively, rates for overall usage and for indictment preparation are above the national average, and the Area produces its own templates to aid performance monitoring. The Area did not meet its confiscation order target in 2004-05, but succeeded in increasing substantially the value of orders made. By July 2005 the Area had already succeeded in meeting its target for the value of confiscation orders. The focus now needs to move to bringing the cracked trial rate down, and to bringing ineffective trials within targets.

3A: The Area ensures that cases progress at each court appearance

- There is good liaison with criminal justice partners, and regular case progression meetings, with performance improving as a result. The Area and the police jointly monitor performance and file quality. Case progression officers (CPOs) have been in place in the trial units since January 2004. They meet regularly with their counterparts in the court and police to discuss individual cases and general trends, and their impact can be seen in the reduction in ineffective trials since their introduction.
- Crown Court cases are routinely reviewed and prepared promptly, with follow up work undertaken where necessary. Most cases are ready to proceed at each court hearing. The casework quality assurance scheme is utilised to review and monitor review and case preparation, and there is close liaison with police on performance.
- In 2004-05, the Area obtained 27 orders under the Proceeds of Crime Act, totalling £3.5m in value, which represented a substantial increase in the value of orders from 2003-04, although the Area did not meet its target of 79 orders. The Area is monitoring Proceeds of Crime Act cases and has already met its 2005-06 target for the value of confiscation orders, obtaining orders to the value of £1,798,343 by the end of the first quarter. A commitment to restraint and seizure of assets has been demonstrated both within the Area, and in the Lancashire Criminal Justice Group.
- There have been no wasted costs ordered against the Area.

Aspects for improvement

- The timeliness of the low number of youth committals is not as good as the national average, with 86% of committals within the target period, as against a national average of 91%.
- Instructions to counsel include an analysis of the issues and are delivered to counsel promptly, but some work remains to be done to ensure that the acceptability of pleas is adequately addressed in all cases.

3B: The Area contributes effectively to reducing cracked and ineffective trials

- The ineffective trial rate is reducing (for 2004-05, the rate was 18.5%) and this represents a significant reduction on the year before, when the rate stood at 22%. The improvement has been assisted by close liaison with criminal justice partners, and regular discussions which are backed up by accurate and comprehensive performance reports.
- There is regular and formal analysis of all ineffective trials, and appropriate action is taken in all cases where the prosecution has been at fault. The numbers of, and causes for, ineffective trials are closely monitored, and reported on at a District and Area level, and these reports are used to inform discussions at District performance meetings and Area management team meetings.

Aspects for improvement

- Although the rate of ineffective trials reduced in 2004-05 the Area narrowly missed its own and national targets for ineffective trials which stood at 18% and 18.4% respectively. The Area's ineffective trial rate in continuing to reduce in 2005-06.
- For cracked trials the rates are noticeably worse than the national average (46.9% as against 39.2% nationally), and the Area needs to re-focus its activities on this aspect. In particular, it needs to address those cases where a trial cracks because the prosecution accepts a plea to a lesser charge, where the Area rate for 2004-05 was 12.3% as against a national rate of 7.4%.

3C: The Area demonstrates that CMS contributes to the effective management of cases

- The Area's rate for indictment preparation on CMS (90.2%) is also over the national rate (81.5%). The effective login rate (88.7%) is also better than nationally (80.8%). Standard and Area-modified templates for the Management System (MIS) are used to assist in performance monitoring.

4. ENSURING SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES 3 - GOOD

The Area's rates across a range of performance measures, such as unsuccessful outcomes, overall conviction rates, magistrates' court discontinuances, and offences brought to justice, are better than national performance or above target. Where the Area's figures are not as good, the disparities are small. Casework is reviewed, and unsuccessful outcomes are monitored. Action is taken to draw out lessons to be learned, and to share these with Area staff and criminal justice partners.

4A: The Area is working to increase the number of successful outcomes and reduce the level of attrition after proceedings have commenced

- For the full year to March 2005, results compared with national averages show:

OUTCOME	AREA FIGURE	NATIONAL AVERAGE
Magistrates' courts		
Discontinuance & bindovers	11.9%	12.5%
No case to answer	0.4%	0.3%
Dismissed after trial	1.4%	1.5%
Discharged committals	0.1%	0.3%
Overall conviction rate	83.6%	80.8%
Crown Court		
Judge ordered acquittals	12.2%	14.2%
Judge directed acquittals	2.2%	2.0%
Acquittals after trial	6.7%	6.3%
Overall conviction rate	78.2%	75.8%

The majority of these show performance as better than national rates, and the overall conviction rates in all the Area's courts are noticeably better than the national rates. Where the Area performs less well than the CPS nationally, the disparities are small.

- There is formal assessment of the quality of review and case handling, with appropriate action being taken when necessary. The casework quality assurance (CQA) process is used to dip-sample cases from each lawyer every month, and in addition, there are certain categories of cases, such as domestic violence or rape, where the lawyer is required to obtain the authorisation of a senior or specialist lawyer before a case is discontinued. Individual lawyers are informed of issues with any review decisions, and learning points of more general application are disseminated in performance reports and team meetings. In one Unit, the lawyers have a specific objective to reduce the number of unsuccessful outcomes.
- Adverse outcome forms are completed in most appropriate cases, and clearly set out the reasons for acquittal. Action has been taken, both internally and with the police, and performance is improving as a result, and necessary changes to procedures have been made, communicated and implemented. The Area's adverse outcome rate is better than the national average. Failed cases are reported on, reviewed by the Assistant District Crown Prosecutor, and a synopsis circulated to all relevant staff. Reports from the Prosecution Team Performance Management system are shared with the police, and headline data and issues are also fed back into the Lancashire Criminal Justice Board performance assessments.
- The discontinuance/bind over, discharged committal, and judge ordered acquittal (JDA) rates are lower (better) than the national average and reducing. The rate for no case to answer (NCTA) in the magistrates' courts and those for judge directed acquittals and jury acquittals after trial in the Crown Court are all a little worse than national averages.
- The Area has met its target in relation to unsuccessful outcomes and its performance is better than the national performance. In the magistrates' court, the Area had 16.4% of cases result in an unsuccessful outcome, and 83.6% result in convictions, as against national rates of 19.2% and 80.8% respectively. In the Crown Court, the Area's rates for these measures were 21.8% and 78.2%, compared with national rates of 24.2% and 75.8%.
- The criminal justice area offences brought to justice (OBTJ) target has been met and performance is improving. Last year, the Area's target was 33,696, and the Area recorded 35,061 offences brought to justice (an increase of 15.5% over the 2001-02 baseline). The target for OBTJ is a shared one set by reference to the criminal justice area. The ability of the CPS to influence this particular target is limited because it includes offences dealt with by non-prosecution disposals. The CPS's contribution comes through managing cases to keep discontinuance and unsuccessful outcomes low, to which CPS Lancashire has successfully contributed. The Area's performance on this, and on sanction detections, improved over the year, and has continued to improve into 2005-06.

5. HANDLING SENSITIVE CASES AND HATE CRIMES 3 - GOOD

The Area reviews and monitors the handling of sensitive and specialist casework, and produces performance information routinely for hate crime and domestic violence. There are designated champions and specialists, who have clear roles, and an active involvement in their particular field. The logging and flagging of cases needs some attention.

5A: The Area identifies and manages sensitive cases effectively

- The review and handling of sensitive cases is formally assessed, with appropriate action being taken where necessary. All unsuccessful outcomes are monitored in any event, and sensitive cases are reviewed particularly closely during that process. Senior managers are also involved in the most sensitive casework, for example, all fatal road traffic incidents will be seen by the District Crown Prosecutor, and the Area champions are also utilised to help assess the handling of sensitive casework. The domestic violence co-ordinator produces regular statistics on the handling and outcomes of cases. The Area's training timetable, and its learning and development plan include many of the specialist and sensitive casework subjects.
- The Area undertakes an analysis of hate crime cases in which a reduction or change of charge, or an agreed basis of plea, reduces or removes the 'hate element' from the offence and there is evidence of some action being taken. There is analysis of the racist incident monitoring forms, and the Area also produces regular data and analysis of racially and religiously aggravated offences. Prosecutors are required to notify the District Crown Prosecutor in any case where charges are reduced or dropped.
- The Area has appointed champions and specialists for sensitive cases, who disseminate information to prosecutors and caseworkers, and provide guidance/mentoring, and manage/handle cases where appropriate. Champions and specialists have specific objectives relating to their roles, and the Lancashire Criminal Justice Board has produced a specific written protocol for the role of the hate crime co-ordinator. The champions circulate updates on their particular topics, advise colleagues, and give training where necessary.
- Sensitive cases are handled by prosecutors with the appropriate specialist skills and knowledge. Such cases are allocated to specialists from the outset. Where cases come through the pre-charge decision procedure, generally the police will ensure that they make a specific appointment to consult the relevant specialist, or submit a full file to a senior lawyer.

- The Area takes CPS policies and HMCPSI thematic reviews into account when devising Area practice. Summaries of the points to note from recent policies or reports are circulated to lawyers and caseworkers, and also covered in team meetings. The thematic report on rape led to a review and the production of an action plan to ensure that key messages from the Inspectorate's report were reflected in Area policy.
- In 2005-06 the Area is gradually reducing, and is already meeting its target for, the percentage of unsuccessful outcomes in hate crime prosecutions, (25.1% for the period April - August 2005).

Aspects for improvement

- Sensitive cases are not always flagged up on the Case Management System (CMS). In a check on a randomly selected ten files for racially and religiously aggravated offences, eight were correctly flagged as a racially aggravated incidents, but five were missing either that flag, or an appropriate flag for domestic violence or an identified victim.
- The maintenance of a log of sensitive cases is established in two of the units, but not in the remaining units

6. CUSTODY TIME LIMITS

2 - FAIR

The Area has reviewed its custody time limit (CTL) practice against national guidance. Staff have been trained, and compliance is monitored. Managers and the champion take an active interest in the effective working of the system, and guidance and updates are issued as required. However, the Area has yet to secure the involvement of local courts in a joined-up approach, and a recent failure can be attributed, in part, to this lack of effective joint working. A comprehensive Area wide system should be established which conforms to national guidance.

6A: Area custody time limit systems comply with current CPS guidance and case law

- The Area reviewed its CTL practice against new national guidelines and issued additional instructions to staff, and the CTL champion circulates guidance and updates as required. Staff have been trained in both the local system and the relevant law, and refresher training is provided where managers identify a need among their staff.
- Office systems contain some elements of good practice including a weekly check of the diary system. Reality checks on site of a sample of files from across the Area confirmed that all dates were correctly recorded on the file and in the diary. Applications to extend, where applicable, were made in a timely manner.
- Senior managers take an active interest in the effective functioning of the system and require regular assurances that the CTL system is effective and up to date. The Chief Crown Prosecutor and Area Business Manager conducted an assessment of the CTL system, and carried out a dip-sample of files from each office to assure themselves of the system's efficiency and robustness so that they could complete the certificate of assurance which Areas provide to CPS headquarters. In addition, unit managers monitor compliance on a regular basis, and use the IT system to check task completion.

Aspects for improvement

- The Area has had no CTL failures in 2004-05, but had one failure in the early part of 2005-06. The failure arose following removal of a case administratively from the court list, and the CPS failing to realise in time for the application to extend the CTL to be re-listed. Following the failure, the CCP circulated details of the case and lessons to be learned to all staff.

- No local agreements have been reached with the courts regarding the agreement of expiry dates in court or the courts' involvement in monitoring expiry dates. Discussions have begun with the Crown Court to agree a protocol, but there have been limited and less effective efforts to secure the magistrates' courts commitment to joint working on CTL monitoring.
- The restructuring of district offices should be used by the Area as an opportunity to develop and issue revised and complete CTL guidance and practice, which complies in all respects with national guidance, to ensure standardised and good practice across the Area.

7. DISCLOSURE**2 - FAIR**

The Area has made some progress in addressing issues raised by the last inspection report, and has plans in place to train lawyers and caseworkers on the new disclosure regime. There is good liaison with the police on disclosure issues. The Area champion is closely involved with training and updating colleagues, and there are systems in place to monitor compliance with disclosure duties. However, there is evidence that the Area's monitoring is not as robust as it might be, and some housekeeping defects identified at the last inspection, and in the follow-up report, remain to be rectified.

7A: The Area takes steps to ensure that there is compliance with the prosecution's duties of disclosure

- At the time of the last inspection the handling of primary disclosure in the magistrates' courts and Crown Court was substantially better than the national average (82.4% and 93.3% against 71.6% and 79.9% respectively). However, the handling of secondary disclosure in the Crown Court was not as good as national performance (53.3% against 59.4%)
- Prosecutors' performance in relation to disclosure is being formally assessed, with appropriate action taken where necessary. The casework quality assurance system is used to monitor compliance with the disclosure regime, and senior managers also check disclosure as part of their review of all adverse cases. Issues identified are fed back to individual lawyers, and where appropriate, the police. Wider lessons to be learned are disseminated to all staff. However, the Area's own monitoring has not identified continuing poor performance with regard to file housekeeping, which is discussed below.
- Progress had been made on the performance on secondary disclosure by the time of the Inspectorate's follow up report, which had been identified as an issue in the original inspection. This progress has been maintained, and the Area has also made efforts to address the correct dating of primary disclosure letters.
- Area systems ensure that all sensitive material schedules and unused sensitive material are stored securely. The police bring sensitive material to meetings with senior lawyers, then take it away again.

- The Area has appointed a disclosure champion, who undertakes some work in disseminating information to prosecutors and caseworkers, and providing guidance/mentoring. The champion will have a central role in the training scheduled for later in the year, and in the meantime has circulated updates and lessons to be learned from cases, where appropriate.
- Most prosecutors and caseworkers have received some preliminary training on the disclosure provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 and the new Disclosure Manual. A programme of training has been arranged, which will take place once the disclosure champion has attended the advanced training course being organised centrally.
- Work has been undertaken with the police, including on improving the quality of schedules and training, and this has resulted in improvement to the quality of unused material schedules, and in a better understanding on the part of officers as to the disclosure regime. There are plans to include the police disclosure officers working on major enquiries in the advanced disclosure training for lawyers and caseworkers.

Aspects for improvement

- Although some work has been undertaken to address the issues raised in the last inspection, and there is evidence of some improvement, a more systematic approach is required. A reality check on files indicated that the majority did not keep unused material separate on the file and neither was the disclosure record sheet attached to the unused material folder and completed. It is apparent that the Area's own monitoring has not identified or addressed these issues in a sufficiently effective manner.
- In one instance, a case went to trial in the magistrates' court without any disclosure having been undertaken, but in all other cases examined in a reality check, disclosure was made properly (save for the poor practice set out above) and in a timely manner.

8. THE SERVICE TO VICTIMS AND WITNESSES
3 - GOOD

The Area operates the direct communication with victim (DCV) scheme well, and is developing a good service to victims and witnesses through its first witness care unit (WCU); three other witness care units are on target to be established by the end of the year. In 2004-05 the Area had a slightly higher proportion than the national average of trials which were ineffective or cracked due to witness problems, but the WCU has made substantial improvement to witness attendance in its first four months of operation. The Area does not formally assess how well victims are treated at court by their own staff or agents.

8A: The needs of victims and witnesses are fully considered and there is timely and appropriate liaison, information and support throughout the prosecution process

- The Area performs well in contacting victims when charges have been reduced or dropped. Letters were sent to victims within the five day deadline in 79% of cases, and work undertaken by CPS headquarters estimates that in 2004-05 83% of relevant cases were captured, substantially above the national average of 56.3%.
- A protocol is in place for the treatment of victims and witnesses which sets timescales for the CPS and the police for the exchange of information and warning of witnesses; performance is currently kept under review by case progression officers, although is not formally monitored.
- Special measures have been used effectively in the Area to enable particularly vulnerable victims to give evidence.
- The needs of victims and witnesses are considered by lawyers at charging centres and, until witness care units are established fully, victims and witnesses are kept informed of their case by DCV co-ordinators in district offices. In order to improve the service to victims and witnesses practitioners from the criminal justice agencies have produced a leaflet covering the 20 most asked questions about attending court, to help them through the process. The leaflet is sent out to victims five days after the witness warning letter.
- In 2004-05 the percentages of ineffective and cracked trials in the magistrates' courts due to the absence of prosecution witnesses (other than the police) stood at 5.3% and 5.5% respectively, both not as good as the national averages of 4.48.% and 4.92%. In the Crown Court the absence of prosecution witnesses leading to ineffective trials was also slightly worse, at 4% against a national average of 3.7%.

- The Area is in the process, with criminal justice partners, of establishing WCUs across the county. The first WCU, established in Blackpool in March 2004, increased the incidence of attendance of prosecution witnesses at court from 46% to 86% in four months. Further units are planned for Burnley, Lancaster and Preston. The opening of the planned unit in Burnley was deferred from June 2005 to October 2005 because of IT difficulties. The timing of the opening of remaining units is linked to accommodation changes within the Area, but all are on target to open by the end of the year.
- In establishing the units there has been close co-operation with criminal justice partners, with CPS staff training police staff in criteria for the use of special measures and to reinforce the victim personal statement scheme. Good systems for monitoring and managing the performance of the units have been established with monthly monitoring of witness attendance, offers and the take up of victims personal statements (within the WCU victims' personal statements were offered in 100% of cases), and special measures applications. These monitoring arrangements will be replicated in all units.
- In 2004-05 witnesses waiting times at court were shorter than the national average in the magistrates' courts in the June and November surveys. In the Crown Court they were longer than average at the time of the November survey.

Aspects for improvement

- The Area does not have a formal system to ensure that prosecution advocates and CPS staff undertake their responsibilities in respect of victims and witnesses at court.

9. PRESENTING AND PROGRESSING CASES AT COURT 2 - FAIR

The Area liaises closely with criminal justice partners on case progression and effective trial management, and on listing to maximise the effective deployment of lawyers, designated caseworkers, and higher court advocates. Prosecutors are allocated to courts based on their experience and are given sufficient time to prepare cases. Where complaints are received, they are addressed effectively, but there is no systematic monitoring of in-house advocates or of agents and counsel. Agents are not provided with an instruction pack, although experienced agents are chosen, and neither agents nor counsel are included in training or the circulation of guidance.

9A: The Area ensures that prosecution advocates and staff attend court promptly, are professional, well prepared and contribute to effective case progression

- The Area is among those agencies leading the initiative to improve case progression in court. The Area is closely involved with criminal justice partners in the introduction of the effective trial management programme, and has also worked effectively with local courts to improve listing arrangements and make more effective use of designated caseworkers and Higher Court Advocates.
- Papers are provided to agents, counsel and in-house prosecutors promptly, enabling all advocates to prepare thoroughly for court. The rotas are drafted specifically with the intention of allowing prosecutors sufficient preparation time, and liaison with the court regarding the listing times of early first hearings has also taken place to facilitate proper preparation by designated caseworkers. Agreements are in place regarding the transfer of cases between courts.
- Selection of prosecution advocates for all courts is regularly undertaken with full consideration of their experience, expertise and qualifications. Suitably trained prosecutors cover specialist courts within the Area; youth remand and domestic violence courts are conducted exclusively by specialist lawyers.
- The Area has received occasional complaints from other agencies regarding agent prosecutors, and has acted in a timely and effective manner to address those complaints.

Aspects for improvement

- The Area undertakes some monitoring of the advocacy standards of in-house prosecutors, and there is feedback to individuals, but this is largely limited to newer advocates, and there is no systematic or embedded monitoring of other in-house prosecutors. The monitoring of the quality of endorsements is also not structured, although managers do check these when reviewing files as part of the casework quality assurance system.
- Agent usage was very high at the beginning of 2004-05 and exceeded national average for the year as a whole. Whilst the Area largely uses established and experienced local agents, they and counsel are not monitored in any systematic manner. Any monitoring or action to address poor performance is reliant on an issue being raised by an external agency or happening by chance during an ad hoc visit to court by one of the Area's managers.
- There is no training for agents and information is only sporadically provided to them about new initiatives or policy directives. Counsel or agents are not invited to attend in-house training events, and there is no instruction or information pack prepared and supplied as a matter of routine to agents.

10. DELIVERING CHANGE**3 - GOOD**

The management team quickly established a clear sense of purpose for the Area and change has been managed to ensure that the Area is able to meet national objectives for the service and local targets with criminal justice partners; there has been good analysis of risks. There is scope for the formal management of changes to procedures across the Area, and for the arrangements for review of change to be built into the change management process.

10A: The Area has a clear sense of purpose supported by relevant plans

- The Area has a clear sense of purpose. The management team quickly, during the course of 2004, set out a vision for the Area which addressed fully how the Area would meet national strategic and operational objectives.
- The Area's current business plan, which was drawn up after a staff planning day, sets out relevant objectives and targets and establishes responsibility for delivery.
- Performance against key targets and objectives is considered by the Lancashire Management Group (LMG) and regularly at the Chief Crown Prosecutor and Area Business Manager's quarterly meetings with district management teams.
- There is evidence of successful planning with CJS partners, which takes place through the Local Criminal Justice Board, the Narrowing the Justice Gap group, and other Area-wide and local groups. These inter-agency groups have addressed such matters as how to improve the number and value of confiscation orders, listing arrangements, and planned for national initiatives such as the introduction of statutory pre-charge decision making and the development of witness care units.

10B: A coherent and co-ordinated change management strategy exists

- The Area has a dedicated project manager who either leads projects or sits on local project management teams, which may be led by others, to ensure continuity. The project manager reports on progress to the Area Business Manager who in turn reports to the LMG.

- The Area has assessed pertinent risks as part of its business plan. Risks are reviewed monthly, and the Area has adjusted its plans during the course of the year as appropriate. For example the planned number of WCUs was changed in the light of the Area's planned structural change, and the Area decided not to establish complex casework units because of the effect on units of the loss of the most experienced lawyers, instead deciding to establish Higher Court Advocate Units.
- There is evidence that change has been successfully implemented: statutory charging has been delivered at all six of the originally planned sites as well as two additional sites on a part-time basis; case progression has been established effectively; a witness care unit has been successfully established with criminal justice partners and performance is improving as a result; and the Area is in the process of managing structural and accommodation changes. There is evidence of a cultural shift towards improved performance management.

Aspects for improvement

- The Area will need to ensure that formal change management arrangements are in place for all aspects of change. Areas structures are changing and procedures and systems within newly created units are also likely to change as a result. While there is some scope for local differences, process changes will also need to be formally managed to ensure efficient systems are in place in all districts.
- There is some evidence of past change having been reviewed, but arrangements for review are not yet systematic or formally incorporated as part of the change management process.

10C: The Area ensures staff have the skills, knowledge and competences to meet the business need

- The Area did not have a training plan for 2004-05, although a programme of training courses which covered key necessary legal and other training was in place. For 2005-06, the Area has a comprehensive learning and development plan, which supports the business plan, which sets out the core legal and operational training that is needed, as well as business training for managers and staff. The plan sets out the training requirements for all levels of staff and makes it clear who training is aimed at. Timescales are set for the delivery of training.
- Relevant equality issues are addressed in the training plan including recognition of the need to ensure arrangements for training meet the needs of part-time staff. A course to help black and minority ethnic staff who wish to apply for promotion has also been scheduled. The Area also has a dedicated domestic violence training plan.

11. MANAGING RESOURCES**2 - FAIR**

The Area's management of resources was weaker in some respects in 2004-05 than the national average. These shortcomings were recognised and during the course of the year urgent action was taken to reduce a potentially large overspend. More rigorous arrangements for monitoring expenditure and to increase the accountability of local managers were also put in place. Steps have been taken to improve the way staff are deployed at all levels and in particular to improve higher court advocate (HCA) and designated caseworker (DCW) usage, both of which were low in 2004-05.

11A: The Area seeks to achieve value for money, and operates within budget

- The Area is in the early stages of developing value for money policies, but action is being taken to use staff more efficiently (see below) and increase value for money through other activity, such as carrying out more training within the Lancashire area to reduce staff travel costs, and procuring goods more efficiently.
- The Area's management team has improved systems for budget control. New systems were put in place for recording and reconciling expenditure. Non ring fenced expenditure is regularly monitored by the Lancashire Management Group, and devolved budgets are formally and informally reviewed on a regular basis with district management teams. Additional funding has been appropriately used to meet key priorities, and district managers are clearly accountable for expenditure and improving performance.
- The monitoring of the prosecution budget forms part of the formal monitoring arrangements at Area and district level. High cost cases are pro-actively managed.
- The Area's management team took urgent steps to reduce a likely large overspend during the course of 2004-05 by significantly reducing expenditure on agents, allowing additional lawyers to move to CPS Direct thus reducing staff costs, and through carefully managing staff vacancies. Despite these actions the final budget outturn was 100.6%, which for the purposes of the overall performance assessment represents fair performance.

Aspects for improvement

- The level of prosecution spend was high in 2004-05 with the Area's final expenditure standing at 133% of its original budget, which for the purposes of the overall performance assessment represents poor performance.

11B: The Area has ensured that all staff are deployed efficiently

- The Area has reviewed district structures to ensure staff are deployed efficiently and that it is able to meet the changed expectations for the prosecution service - in particular, to ensure it is able to undertake pre-charge decision-making and make full and effective use of its HCAs - and was in the process of restructuring at the time of the OPA.
- Administrative staff numbers have been reviewed, and discussions are being held with the police to try to share administrative work and avoid duplication, and ensure efficient administration and staff deployment.
- Agents prosecuted 29.5% of magistrates' courts sessions in 2004-05, higher than the national average of 26.9%, although levels of agent usage reduced considerably during the year from 55% in Quarter 1 to 13.3% in Quarter 4. Agent usage is being carefully controlled in 2005-06 and there is a downward trend in agent usage in all districts.
- Improvements have been made in the management of sick absence which reduced from an equivalent of 13.1 days per member of staff in 2003-04 to 7 days in 2004-05, a level which represents good performance.

Aspects for improvement

- The Area has seven DCWs who covered 1049 sessions in 2004-05, which represented 6.9% of all magistrates' courts sessions, lower than the national average. The Area has pro-actively negotiated with the courts and DCW usage has improved considerably during 2005-06, with a July 2005 figure of 10.9%.
- HCA usage was low in 2004-05, with the Area undertaking 224 of its target 250 sessions, and achieving savings of £120 per session for the last quarter, less than the national average of £224 and representing poor performance. The Area has adopted a new strategy to increase HCA usage, developing two HCA units of almost full time advocates, who also deal with some serious casework. In this way the Area intends to generate sufficient savings to enable it to employ additional lawyers to prosecute in the magistrates' court. The Area is on course to meet its current target of 600 HCA sessions in 2005-06.
- Although restructuring has taken place, work has yet to be undertaken to determine the optimum staffing levels within each new unit, and to set expectations.

12. MANAGING PERFORMANCE TO IMPROVE
3 - GOOD

The Area has demonstrated a commitment to good performance management, with timely and regular consideration of performance at the Lancashire Management Group (LMG) and with district management teams. This increasing commitment has led to improving performance in a numbers of aspects, and there is good co-operation with criminal justice partners to improve performance locally and at Area level. Managers assure the quality of casework using the national scheme, but the results of the monitoring are not considered on an Area or district level.

12A: Managers are held accountable for performance

- The Area has demonstrated a commitment to good performance management. There is timely and regular consideration of relevant aspects performance by the LMG, and within districts. Managers are held accountable for performance, and accountability and responsibility for good performance has been re-inforced by regular quarterly meetings between the Chief Crown Prosecutor, Area Business Manager and district management teams.
- There is considerable evidence of action taken by managers to improve performance across a range of aspects including, for example, action to improve budget management and staff utilisation, to increase the number and value of confiscation orders, to improve police file quality, and to reduce ineffective trials and increase witness attendance at court
- The effectiveness of some operational systems, particularly involving use of the case management system, is addressed through regular meetings between the Area Business Manager and administrative managers. Accountability for operational effectiveness has also been included specifically within the job description of new district business manager posts.
- Managers have used the performance appraisal system to improve performance and individual objectives have been set for lawyers to increase usage of the electronic case management system (CMS), resulting in an increase in the percentages of full file reviews now recorded on CMS.

Aspects for improvement

- Operational systems have to some extent been reviewed as part of the review of staff structures. The Area should now, as structures and managers have changed, move towards the standardisation of processes to ensure operational effectiveness and efficiency in every district. There is scope for ongoing review of procedures and systems (through regular meetings between the Area Business Manager and district Business Managers) to ensure continuous improvement, and to develop and disseminate best practice in a more formal way.

12B: The Area is committed to managing performance jointly with CJS partners

- There is evidence that joint performance management with criminal justice partners is being used to drive up performance. In particular systems have been changed to ensure police are made aware immediately of cases which were discontinued after pre-charge decision and those where further action was recommended but has not been taken, to enable informed discussion between the two agencies. Police file quality is monitored and discussed during regular local meetings. Changes in court scheduling arrangements have been agreed by the CPS and magistrates' courts, to enable designated caseworkers to be used more effectively. The changes have also resulted in an increase in the number of trial courts that can be scheduled, freed up the Area's lawyers to prosecute more trials, and reduced trial waiting times in one part of the county.
- The Area uses the CPS Management Information System and Prosecution Team Performance Management reports to provide timely information to CJS partners.
- In 2004-05, the Area, with its criminal justice partners on the Local Criminal Justice Board, was successful in achieving its targets for the number of offences brought to justice. After a downward turn in performance, the time to deal with persistent young offenders has been brought back within the 71 day target.
- In 2004-05 the Area narrowly missed its targets for reducing the percentage of ineffective trials in the magistrates' and Crown Court (by 1.4% and 0.5% respectively), although performance in the magistrates' court was still better than the national average. The percentage of ineffective trials in the magistrates' court has reduced from an overall figure 24.4% for 2004-05 to 21% for the year to date ending July 2005, and in the Crown Court from 18.5% to 13.2% over the same period, as a result of effective case progression and trial management. The LCJB is also on course to meet its targets for offences brought to justice and sanction detection rates in 2005-06.

12C: Performance information is accurate, timely, concise and user-friendly

- The Area has sufficient skilled staff to produce and manage performance information properly. User friendly, comprehensive, performance information is readily available to managers and staff on the Area's innovative performance drive, and performance is regularly reported in newsletters.

- Performance is compared with that of other similar Areas, particularly in relation to performance in cases where pre-charge decisions have been made, where the Area compares its performance with other Areas operating pre-charge decision-making on a statutory basis.
- Area staff have been provided with guidance on recording performance information accurately, and performance information is checked monthly by the Area performance officer, and anomalies raised with local districts.

12D: Internal systems for ensuring the quality of casework are robust and founded on reliable and accurate analysis

- The casework quality assurance system is in place and there is, in the main, sufficiently robust analysis. District managers are required to give an assurance about their regular assessment of casework quality at quarterly performance meetings with Chief Crown Prosecutor and Area Business Manager. Performance issues which arise are raised with staff individually

Aspects for improvement

- Although senior managers ensure that the casework quality assurance occurs in accordance with the national scheme, the results of the monitoring, and indications about the quality of casework, are not analysed at district or Area level.

13. LEADERSHIP

3 - GOOD

A clear vision for the Area has been set by the senior team who are working corporately to achieve the Area's objectives. Senior managers are both players and leaders in joint work with criminal justice partners. The Area has a pro-active senior champion for equality issues and is adopting a sound approach to ensuring equality is integrated fully into Area business.

13A: The management team communicates the vision, values and direction of the Area well

- Senior managers demonstrated a corporate approach to managing the Area. The senior team's approach is underpinned by clear vision and values. The approach has resulted in a move to a new structure, to meet new expectations for the service, and a cultural push to ensure that national objectives, such as increased higher court advocate usage and improved performance, are met.
- The vision for the Area has been made clear to staff through a series of away days, and is supported by improved arrangements for communication. The Chief Crown Prosecutor and Area Business Manager have also increased day to day contact with staff across the Area, who have been involved in setting Area priorities for the current year.
- Senior CPS managers have played, and continue to play, a key role in the delivery of joint initiatives with criminal justice partners, including pre-charge decision-making, conditional cautioning and the establishment of Witness Care Units across the Area, and are active within the Local Criminal Justice Board and its sub-groups.

Aspect for improvement

- The dialogue with staff is supported by team meetings (some of which have been attended by either the CCP or ABM) which, although they take place in all districts, are not always regular. A governance structure for meetings has yet to be put in place.

3B: Senior managers act as role models for the ethics, values and aims of the Area and the CPS, and demonstrate a commitment to equality and diversity policies

- The Area's commitment to equality and diversity policies is evidenced in a number of ways, including through the personal commitment and involvement of managers. The Area has a pro-active senior champion for equality issues, and these have been integrated explicitly into business and training plans. During 2004-05 the Area champion attended team meetings to reinforce CPS equality and diversity policies, and the Area induction package has been redesigned to include them.
- The percentage of staff from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds is close to the proportion of working adults within these groups in the population of Lancashire as a whole (3.95% against 4.16%) and discrepancies in particular districts have to some extent been addressed since the last inspection. The Area has set targets to ensure that the community is reflected at all grades, and in particular, to increase the proportion of BME staff at lawyer level, and is also seeking to achieve a more equal gender balance within the service.
- The Area is working with other public sector employers, through the Breakthrough Group, to communicate employment possibilities to all sections of the community.
- The last staff survey indicated that staff in Lancashire were less content than staff nationally with the way communication was handled and the way dignity at work was promoted. Action has been taken by the management team to address concerns expressed by staff during the last staff survey, through improved communication and increased focus on equality issues. Steps have been taken to ensure that a consistent approach is taken by managers in dealing with human resource and personnel issues.

14. SECURING COMMUNITY CONFIDENCE

3 - GOOD

There is commitment by senior managers to securing community confidence which forms part of the core business of the Area. The Area is establishing good relationships with the media and participates fully with criminal justice partners in activity designed to enable the public to understand how the criminal justice system works. The Area has contacts with vulnerable sections of the community and is using its local knowledge to improve the service it delivers.

14A: The Area is working pro-actively to secure the confidence of the community

- There is evidence that senior managers are committed to engaging with and securing the confidence of the community. Community confidence work is marshalled by a senior manager who is a member of Lancashire Management Group, and represents the Area on the Local Criminal Justice Board's (LCJB) confidence group, and the Area has a communications officer who also has some responsibility for community engagement. Engaging with the community and securing their confidence forms part of the core business of the Area.
- The Area has up-to-date information on demographics, community groups, and maintains a database of contacts within other agencies and organisations; a log is kept of engagement activity.
- The approach of the new management team has been to improve contact with the media, to ensure that good news is publicised, and to develop approaches to community engagement with criminal justice partners within the LCJB, so that work can be coordinated and focused.
- As a result, the use of special measures to ensure a particularly vulnerable witness was able to give evidence was particularly well publicised. The Area has also established good relationships with a local Asian newspaper, and having learnt, from work undertaken within the LCJB, that confidence in criminal justice is particularly low among the young has taken steps to publicise the criminal justice system on a local radio station aimed at young people.
- Area staff contribute fully to a series of road shows, organised through the LCJB, which visit community groups and colleges to explain the work of criminal justice agencies, and make presentations to crime and disorder reduction partnerships. The Area is also working through the Board to try to establish relationships with community groups in the county that are harder to engage with, so that contact can be focused and to avoid 'consultation overload' within certain community groups.

- Area staff are fully involved in domestic violence fora across the county, which enables contact with all sections of the community, including Asian women's groups. Good links have also been established with groups representing the interests of the gay and lesbian communities, and representatives have attended staff training days to discuss the effects of homophobic crime. Working with criminal justice partners, the Area also had a presence at the Gay Pride event and other major events in the county. Staff at all levels undertake outreach work in schools and colleges.
- Through its understanding of the communities it serves, the Area recognised that there was a need for witness care unit staff to have special training. Training has already been given to unit staff in dealing with victims of domestic violence, and cultural awareness training is shortly to be given to all staff within the new units. The Area also formally sought the views of members of the public on draft letters to be sent by the witness care unit to victims and witnesses, to ensure they were easily understandable
- Public confidence in Lancashire in the effectiveness of the criminal justice agencies in bringing offenders to justice has increased from 35% in 2002-03 to 44% at the end of 2004-05, an increase of 9% which is greater than the average increase in confidence for England and Wales as a whole, which stood at 4%.
- The Area is meeting its target for 2005-06 for reducing the percentage of hate crime prosecutions that have an unsuccessful outcome.

Aspect for improvement

- Finalisation of Area's community engagement strategy, that is currently in draft.

ANNEX A

PERFORMANCE DATA

ASPECT 1: PRE-CHARGE DECISION-MAKING

MAGISTRATES' COURTS CASES								
Discontinuance rate			Guilty plea rate			Attrition rate		
National Target March 2007	National Performance Quarter 4 2004-05	Area Performance Quarter 4 2004-05	National Target March 2007	National Performance Quarter 4 2004-05	Area Performance Quarter 4 2004-05	National Target March 2007	National Performance Quarter 4 2004-05	Area Performance Quarter 4 2004-05
11%	16.3%	17.8%	52%	68.8%	71.4%	31%	22.7%	22.7%
CROWN COURT CASES								
Discontinuance rate			Guilty plea rate			Attrition rate		
National Target March 2007	National Performance Quarter 4 2004-05	Area Performance Quarter 4 2004-05	National Target March 2007	National Performance Quarter 4 2004-05	Area Performance Quarter 4 2004-05	National Target March 2007	National Performance Quarter 4 2004-05	Area Performance Quarter 4 2004-05
11%	14.6%	10.7%	68%	66%	72.9%	23%	23.8%	18.4%

ASPECT 2: MANAGING MAGISTRATES' COURTS CASES

INEFFECTIVE TRIAL RATE			OVERALL PERSISTENT YOUNG OFFENDERS PERFORMANCE (ARREST TO SENTENCE)		
National Target	National Performance 2004-05	Area Performance 2004-05	National Target	National Performance (3-month rolling average Feb 05)	Area Performance (3-month rolling average Feb 05)
24.5%	24.8%	24.4%	71 days	67 days	74 days

TIME INTERVALS/TARGETS FOR CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS IN MAGISTRATES' COURTS CHARGED CASES ONLY (MARCH 2005)						
	Initial Guilty Plea Target 59 days		Trials Target 143 days		Committals Target 176 days	
	Cases within target (%)	Sample size (no of defendants)	Cases within target (%)	Sample size (no of defendants)	Cases within target (%)	Sample size (no of defendants)
National	83%	6,152	66%	2,698	89%	992
Area	86%	186	55%	82	77%	39

TIME INTERVALS/TARGETS FOR CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS IN YOUTH COURTS CHARGED AND SUMMONSED CASES (MARCH 2005)						
	Initial Guilty Plea Target 59 days		Trials Target 176 days		Committals Target 101 days	
	Cases within target (%)	Sample size (no of defendants)	Cases within target (%)	Sample size (no of defendants)	Cases within target (%)	Sample size (no of defendants)
National	87%	5,185	87%	3,309	91%	190
Area	78%	178	89%	106	86%	7

ASPECT 3: MANAGING CROWN COURT CASES

INEFFECTIVE TRIAL RATE		
National Target	National Performance 2004-05	Area Performance 2004-05
18.5%	15.8%	18.5%

ASPECT 4: ENSURING SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES

UNSUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES (AS A PERCENTAGE OF COMPLETED MAGISTRATES' COURTS AND CROWN COURT CASES)		
National Target	National Performance 2004-05	Area Performance 2004-05
21%	19.6%	18.5%

OFFENCES BROUGHT TO JUSTICE		
	CJS Area Target 2004-05	CJS Area Performance 2004-05
Against 2001-02 baseline	+11%	+15.5%
Number	33,696	35,061

ASPECT 7: DISCLOSURE

DISCLOSURE HANDLED PROPERLY IN MAGISTRATES' COURTS AND CROWN COURT CASES PERFORMANCE IN THE LAST INSPECTION CYCLE		
	National Performance	Area Performance
Primary test in magistrates' courts	71.6%	82.4%
Primary test in Crown Court	79.9%	93.3%
Secondary test in Crown Court	59.4%	53.3%
Overall average	70.3%	76.3%

ASPECT 11: MANAGING RESOURCES

NON RING-FENCED ADMINISTRATION COSTS BUDGET OUTTURN PERFORMANCE (END OF YEAR RANGES)	
2003-04	2004-05
100.3%	100.6%

DCW DEPLOYMENT (AS % OF MAGISTRATES' COURTS SESSIONS)			HCA SAVINGS (PER SESSION)		SICKNESS ABSENCE (PER EMPLOYEE PER YEAR)		
National Target 2005-06	National Performance 2004-05	Area Performance	National Performance Quarter 4 2004-05	Area Performance Quarter 4 2004-05	National Target	National Performance 2004	Area Performance 2004
11.6%	8.3%	6.9%	£224	£120	8 days	8.7 days	7 days

ASPECT 14: SECURING COMMUNITY CONFIDENCE

PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN EFFECTIVENESS OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE AGENCIES IN BRINGING OFFENDERS TO JUSTICE (BRITISH CRIME SURVEY)	
CJS Area Baseline 2002-03	Most Recent CJS Area Figures In 2004-05
35%	44%

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