About the Area inspection programme

In order to fulfil the dual requirements to inspect Area casework quality and the impact of the additional £85 million funding secured by the CPS in the comprehensive spending review on casework quality, we have developed an Area inspection programme that will consist of at least two cycles of inspection which we will be conducted in all 14 CPS geographical Areas. The programme will consist of an initial baseline assessment and a follow up programme of inspection 18 months later.

All inspections will consist of file examination of volume casework in three categories, magistrates’ court (30 cases per Area), Crown Court (40 cases per Area) and Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (20 cases per Area). The cases will be assessed against a set of 59 questions which cover all aspects of casework. Inspectors will apply the ratings of ‘fully meeting the required standard’, ‘partially meeting the required standard’, or ‘not meeting the required standard’ when assessing the quality of case work and legal decisions. The standards we will judge the CPS against are those that Crown Prosecution Service sets for itself. As well as a file examination each Area will be asked to provide a series of core documents to support our evidence and analysis. Inspectors will also observe an Area casework quality committee meeting.

In consultation with the CPS and in recognition of the considerable pressures Areas are under as a result of the covid-19 pandemic, we decided to limit the first baseline of the Area inspection programme to activity of a file examination, document analysis and observation of the casework quality meeting so as to reduce the burden on Areas to the minimum. In the baseline assessment we will not conduct focus groups or interviews with staff or external stakeholders, nor carry out any court observations. We anticipate that we will undertake a fuller programme of our usual methods in the follow-up assessments that will be carried out in Areas when we start the second programme to assess progress from the baseline.

The inspection framework is broken into five elements, which align with the CPS 2025 strategy.

A - Quality Casework

Does the Area deliver excellence in prosecution by ensuring the right person is prosecuted for the right offence, cases are progressed in a timely manner and cases are dealt with effectively?

B – Public Confidence

Does the CPS provide a fair experience for victims and witnesses interacting with them?

C – People

Does the Area support their people with the skills and tools they need to succeed and develop?

D – Digital Capability

Does the CPS use data to drive change to improve casework quality?

E – Strategic Partnerships

Does the CPS influence cross CJS change through trusted partnerships to improve casework quality?

Tranche one of the Area Inspection Programme commenced in March 2021 – the four CPS Areas involved in are CPS Cyrmu-Wales, CPS West Midlands, CPS North East, and CPS South East. The other 10 CPS Areas will be part of the programme during the current business year and we will set out the start dates of tranche 2 and 3 once they commence.