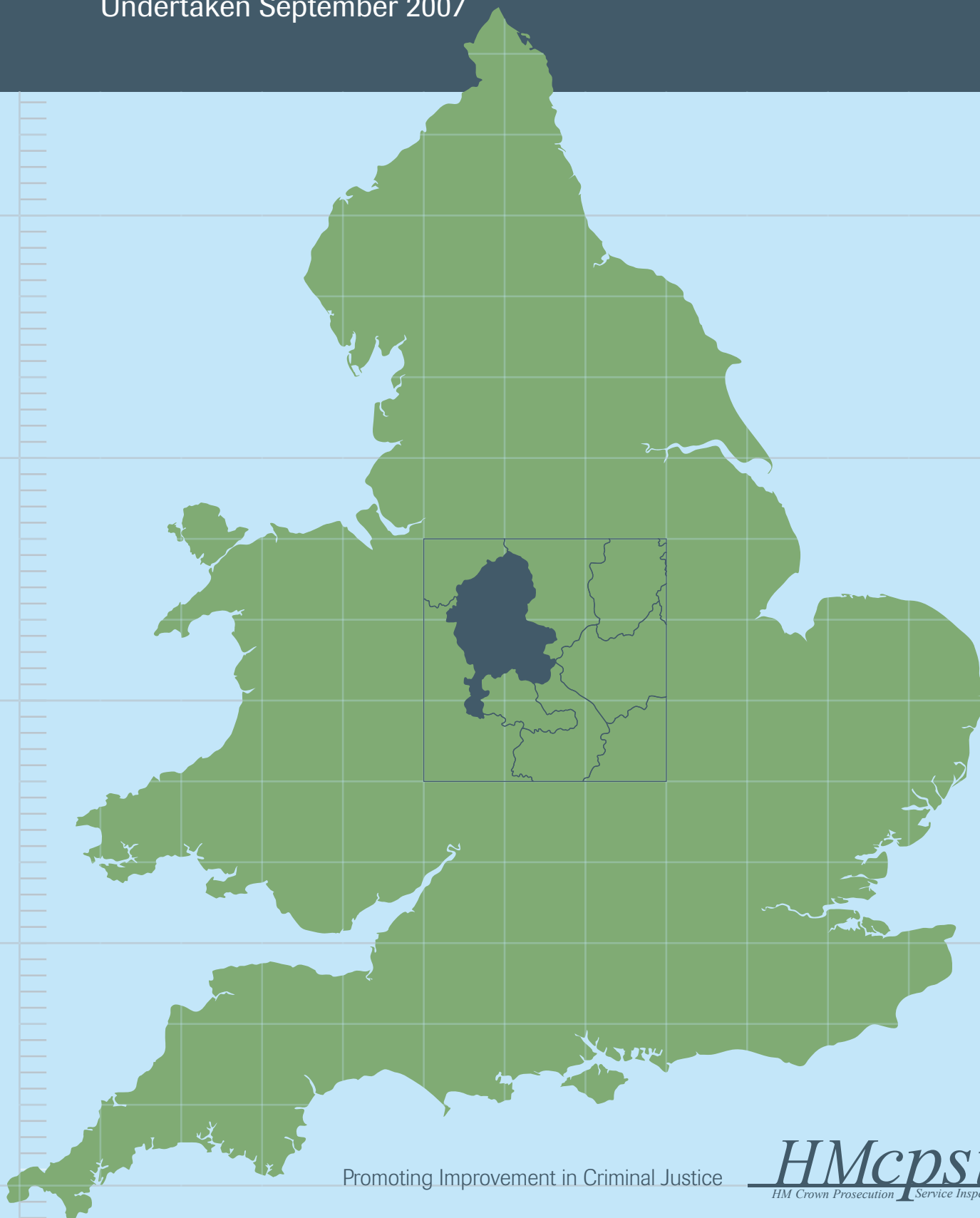


CPS Staffordshire

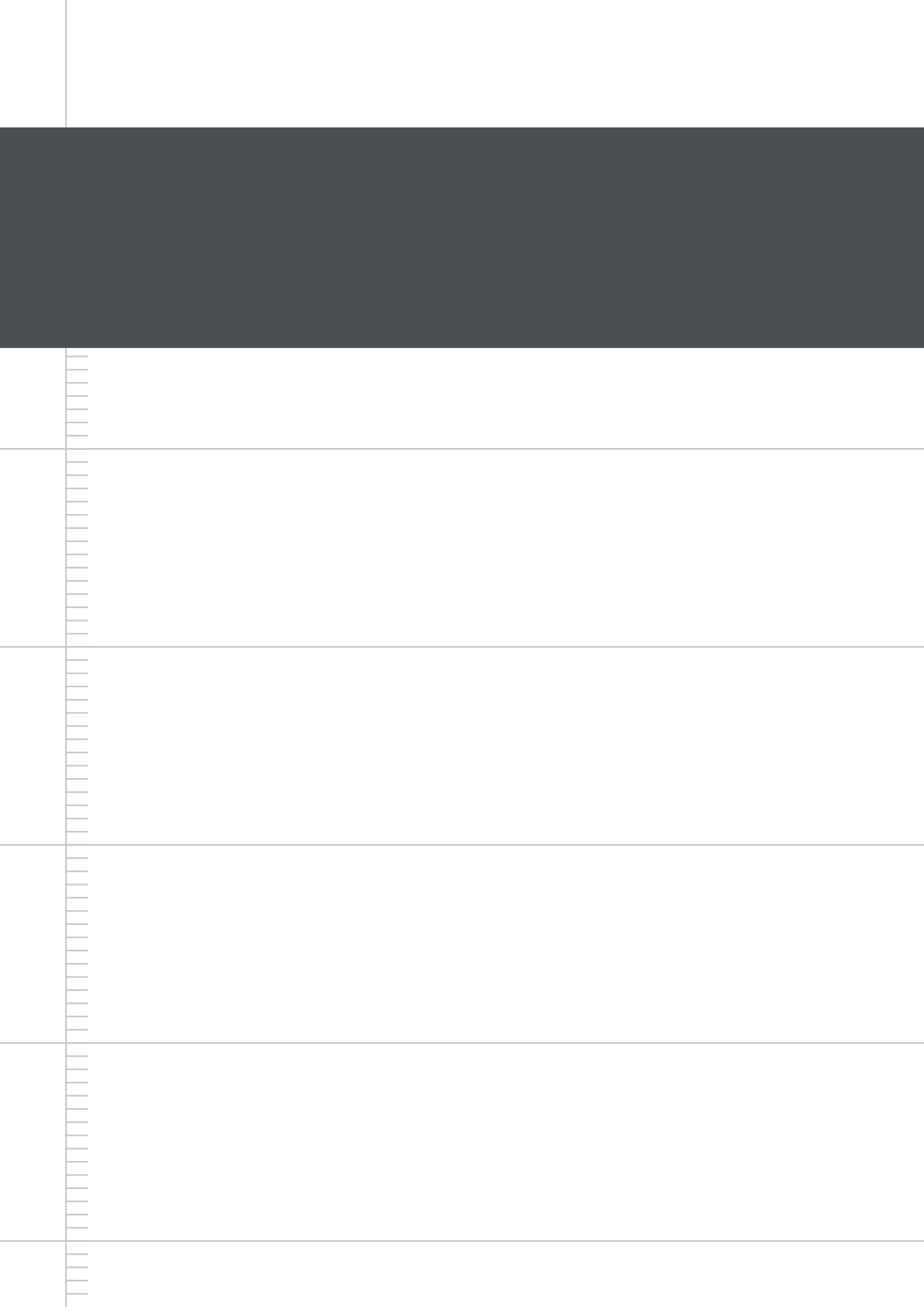
Overall Performance Assessment

Undertaken September 2007



Promoting Improvement in Criminal Justice

*HMcp*si**
HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate



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ABBREVIATIONS

Common abbreviations used in this report are set out below.
Local abbreviations are explained in the report.

ABM	Area Business Manager	HMCPSP	Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate
ABP	Area Business Plan		
AEI	Area Effectiveness Inspection	JDA	Judge Directed Acquittal
ASBO	Anti-Social Behaviour Order	JOA	Judge Ordered Acquittal
BCU	Basic Command Unit or Borough Command Unit	JPM	Joint Performance Monitoring
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic	LCJB	Local Criminal Justice Board
CCP	Chief Crown Prosecutor	MAPPA	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
CJA	Criminal Justice Area	MG3	Form on which a record of the charging decision is made
CJS	Criminal Justice System	NCTA	No Case to Answer
CJSSS	Criminal Justice: Simple, Speedy, Summary	NRFAC	Non Ring-Fenced Administrative Costs
CJU	Criminal Justice Unit	NWNJ	No Witness No Justice
CMS	Case Management System	OBTJ	Offences Brought to Justice
CPIA	Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act	OPA	Overall Performance Assessment
CPO	Case Progression Officer	PCD	Pre-Charge Decision
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service	PCMH	Plea and Case Management Hearing
CPSD	CPS Direct	POCA	Proceeds of Crime Act
CQA	Casework Quality Assurance	PTPM	Prosecution Team Performance Management
CTL	Custody Time Limit	PYO	Persistent Young Offender
DCP	District Crown Prosecutor	SMT/G	Senior Management Team or Group
DCV	Direct Communication with Victims	TU	Trial Unit
DCW	Designated Caseworker	UBM	Unit Business Manager
DP	Duty Prosecutor	UH	Unit Head
ECU	Economic Crime Unit	VPS	Victim Personal Statement
ETMP	Effective Trial Management Programme	WCU	Witness Care Unit
HCA	Higher Court Advocate		

CONTENTS

A	Introduction to the overall performance assessment process	2
B	Area description and caseload	3
C	Summary of judgements	4
D	Defining aspects	7
1	Pre-charge decision-making: management and realising the benefits.....	7
2	Ensuring successful outcomes in the magistrates' courts.....	11
3	Ensuring successful outcomes in the Crown Court	14
4	Progressing cases at court.....	16
5	Sensitive cases and hate crimes	18
6	Disclosure	20
7	Custody time limits	22
8	The service to victims and witnesses	23
9	Delivering change	26
10	Managing resources	28
11	Managing performance to improve.....	31
12	Leadership.....	34
13	Securing community confidence	36
 Annexes		
A	Performance data	37
B	Criminal justice agencies and organisations who assisted with this overall performance assessment	40

A INTRODUCTION TO THE OVERALL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

This report is the outcome of Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate's (HMCPPI) overall assessment of the performance of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in Staffordshire and represents a further assessment against which improvement from the previous baseline assessment in 2004-05 can be measured.

Assessments

Judgements have been made by HMCPPI based on absolute and comparative assessments of performance. These came from national data; CPS self-assessment; HMCPPI's findings; and measurement against 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 relating to the other defining aspects, in order to arrive at the OPA.

The table at page 6 shows the Area performance in each category, as well as the 'direction of travel' since the previous OPA.

An OPA is not a full inspection and differs from traditional inspection activity. Whilst 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 wider programme of inspection activity.

Direction of travel grade

This is a reflection of the Area's change in performance between the current assessment period and the previous OPA, that is between 2004-05 and 2006-07. The potential grades are:

Improved reflects a significant improvement in the performance;

Stable denotes no significant change in performance;

Declined where there has been a significant decline in performance.

B AREA DESCRIPTION AND CASELOAD

CPS Staffordshire serves the area covered by the Staffordshire Police. It has two offices, at Stafford and Stoke-on-Trent. The Area Headquarters (Secretariat) is based at the Stoke-on-Trent office.

During the majority of 2006-07, Area business was divided on geographical lines between the north and south of the county. In the south, work was divided on functional lines between the South Staffordshire Criminal Justice Unit handling cases dealt with in the magistrates' courts and the Trials Unit (TU) handling cases dealt with in the Crown Court. In the north, work was divided between two combined teams dealing with both magistrates' courts and Crown Court work.

During the year 2006-07 the Area had an average of 129.6 full time equivalent staff in post, and a budget of £5,663,116. This represents a 5.1% increase in staff, and a 23.7% increase in budget since 2004-05, the period covered by the Area's last OPA.

Details of the Area's caseload in 2004-05, and in the year to March 2007 are as follows:

Pre-charge work¹

2004-05		2006-07	
Written advice	606	Decisions resulting in a charge	7,312
Pre-charge advice (where available)	4,521	Decisions not resulting in a charge ²	6,444

Magistrates' courts proceedings (including cases previously subject to a pre-charge decision)	2004-05	2006-07	Percentage change
Magistrates' courts prosecutions	26,528	20,920	-21.1%
Other proceedings	28	53	+89.3%
Total magistrates' courts proceedings	26,556	20,973	-21.0%

Crown Court proceedings

(including cases previously subject to a pre-charge decision)			
Cases sent or committed to the Crown Court for determination	1,857	1,639	-11.7%
Committals for sentence ³	436	378	-13.1%
Appeals from the magistrates' courts ³	381	338	-11.3%
Total Crown Court proceedings	2,674	2,355	-11.9%

In 2006-07, 48.1% of offences brought to justice were the result of convictions.

- 1 No valid comparison with 2004-05 pre-charge caseload is possible as statutory charging was only fully in place in all CPS Areas from April 2006 onwards.
- 2 Including decisions resulting in no further action, taken into considerations (TICs), cautions and other disposals.
- 3 Also included in the magistrates' courts figures, where the substantive hearing occurred.

C SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

Contextual factors and background

Since the last OPA, the Area has benefited from a period of stability within the senior management team. However, during 2006-07 the Area has undertaken a major programme of restructuring and has moved from work being divided between magistrates' court cases and Crown Court cases to combined unit structures. The move in the south of the Area took place in March 2007, although more recently the Area has again reconsidered its structures. All staff have also moved into new office accommodation.

The Area's magistrates' courts case load has fallen since the last OPA by 21.0%, and its Crown Court caseload has fallen by 11.3%. Over the same period the Area has had an increase in its budget of 23.7%, and has therefore been able to increase staffing levels by 5.1%.

Summary

Statutory charging is well established and the Area has worked to implement effective systems to accompany charging. Face-to-face advice is provided across the Area which allows for the police to seek early advice. However, arrangements for ensuring only relevant cases are brought for decisions need to be embedded and improved as duty prosecutors are often asked to advise on cases where the police could have made the decision to take no further action or where further work was obviously required. Most of the benefits of charging are being realised, however, the way that cases are recorded on the case management system (CMS) may be impacting on overall performance results.

Generally, performance in the magistrates' courts and Crown Court remains stable in comparison to results at the 2005 OPA, although there has been notable improvement in the magistrates' court discontinuance rate, with performance moving from the second worst nationally, to now being in line with the national average. The quality of case preparation is generally good although full file reviews in the Crown Court sometimes add little to the pre-charge advice. Unsuccessful outcomes are analysed so that lessons can be learned jointly with police.

Performance on cracked and ineffective trials is mixed. In the magistrates' court the cracked, effective and vacated rates are all better than national performance but the Area has failed to meet its target for ineffective trials. Although cases are generally well progressed and follow-up actions are clearly endorsed and carried out it is clear joint case progression systems are in need of review. Taking this forward will be dependent on more effective in working with Her Majesty's Court Service (HMCS) partners to review joint systems. There have been improvements in the use of CMS to record pre-charge decisions (PCDs) and full file reviews, but there is still room for improvement as the system is not being fully utilised or managed. The Area uses the Casework Quality Assurance (CQA) scheme to identify how well cases are being handled. This system was found to be robust particularly in relation to analysis of the way the Area handles unused material. Relevant training has been delivered to all prosecutors and caseworkers, including some advanced training, however the Area's performance in relation to its duties of disclosure has declined, and there is limited recording of the reasons behind disclosure decisions. This failure has been identified and action is underway to address it.

Joint planning with criminal justice partners takes place for new initiatives and the Area has recently introduced conditional cautioning and rolled out Criminal Justice: Simple, Speedy, Summary (CJSSS) in part of the Area. Although it is too early to assess progress through detailed analysis, there are indications that as a result of CJSSS there have been an increased number of guilty pleas at first

hearing. However, the Area needs to ensure that it does not lose sight of ongoing requirements for established initiatives once implementation has been achieved, for example there has been a downturn in performance since the last assessment in relation to the service to victims and witnesses. There is also scope for more formal evaluation of change.

Performance in relation to the Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets is variable; the Area met, together with criminal justice partners, the offences brought to justice target (although the influence of the CPS in this target is limited); failed to meet the timeliness target of 71 days from arrest to sentence for persistent young offenders with the 12 months to December 2006 being 73 days overall; and confidence in the criminal justice system in bringing offenders to justice is below the national average: 40.6% compared to 42.0%, although there is significant commitment to raising the profile of the CPS through participation in community engagement events.

The Area performs well in handling sensitive cases; it ensures that they are allocated to lawyers with the appropriate skills and expertise. The Area's combined hate crimes unsuccessful outcomes are reducing and are better than the national average. The effectiveness of dealing with cases involving domestic violence has been complemented by the introduction of specialist domestic violence courts: a multiagency approach. During the year, the Area has had one failure in a custody case where time limits apply. However, the Area custody time limit (CTL) system complies with national guidance and training has been provided to staff. The Area took remedial action to address the issues identified in the case involving the failure.

The management team has clearly set out a vision for the Area and there are effective communication processes in place to ensure that this message is disseminated. Area staff survey results for the frequency and effectiveness of team meetings are amongst the best nationally. There is active participation by senior managers in the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB), although the level to which this engagement has led to improvement in Area objectives has varied. The focus of the Area appears to be performance driven, sometimes to the detriment of effectively planned and managed change. Monthly performance reports are produced, which are underpinned by good compliance with the Casework Quality Assurance (CQA) scheme.

The management of resources is good and is underpinned by value for money objectives. The non ring-fenced spend and prosecution cost budget was within budget in 2006-07. The use of Higher Court Advocates (HCAs) is increasing and counsel fee savings have exceeded target. Agent's use in the magistrates' court is below the national average. Designated caseworkers (DCWs) are exercising their full powers but are still being under-utilised.

Direction of travel

The last OPA assessed CPS Staffordshire as good. In this report one aspect has improved, six remained stable and six declined. The changes to unit structures and office moves have not produced the expected benefits and this may have contributed to the overall ratings. Performance in relation to most outcomes has remained good and therefore the Area has the capacity to improve those aspects which have declined. In the light of our findings, the Area's overall performance is **GOOD**.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT		GOOD		
Critical aspects	Assessment level			
	OPA 2005	OPA 2007	Direction of travel	
Pre-charge decision-making	Fair	Fair	Stable	
Ensuring successful outcomes in the magistrates' courts	Good	Good	Stable	
Ensuring successful outcomes in the Crown Court	Good	Good	Stable	
The service to victims and witnesses	Good	Fair	Declined	
Leadership	Good	Good	Stable	
Overall critical assessment level		Good		
Progressing cases at court	Good	Good	Stable	
Sensitive cases and hate crime	Excellent	Good	Declined	
Disclosure	Excellent	Fair	Declined	
Custody time limits	Good	Fair	Declined	
Delivering change	Good	Fair	Declined	
Managing resources	Fair	Good	Improved	
Managing performance to improve	Good	Fair	Declined	
Securing community confidence	Good	Good	Stable	
OVERALL ASSESSMENT	Good	GOOD		

D DEFINING ASPECTS

1	PRE-CHARGE DECISION-MAKING: MANAGEMENT AND REALISING THE BENEFITS	OPA 2005	OPA 2007	Direction of travel
		Fair	Fair	Stable

1A The Area ensures pre-charge decision-making operates effectively at police charging centres, and is accurately documented and recorded

- Face-to-face advice is provided by three duty prosecutors (DPs) between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday at the North Area Custody Facility (NACF) in the north of the county. In the south, face-to-face advice is provided between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday by three DPs at four charging centres on a rota basis, and by telephone between those hours when a face-to-face service is not available.
- All appropriate lawyers are included on the charging rota. In 2006-07 they handled an average of 48.4 consultations per day, approximately 8 per lawyer per day. The average time from first decision to charge was 7.3 days, compared to the national average of 9.6 days.
- The Area operates a queuing system managed by the police which means that although face-to-face advice is given, it is often to another investigating officer, rather than directly to the officer in the case, due to the difficulty of working around police shift patterns. In the north, there is an electronic appointment system operated by the police but in the south, officers use a whiteboard to book an appointment after they have arrived at the police station. Shift patterns mean that they have gone off shift before the time of the appointment and advice is given to another officer. Consideration should be given to extending the electronic system which would make it easier for the original officer in the case to discuss it with the DP directly.
- Complex or serious cases are usually dealt with by way of an evidential file submitted to the office, but police officers are encouraged to seek early advice from duty prosecutors before completing a file. Guidance has been issued jointly to police officers and DPs setting out the procedures to follow in such cases.
- Data on the last decision made on pre-charge cases shows that only 56.5% were recorded as face-to-face with 17.6% being written. However, decisions on 24.8% of cases are shown as undefined, that is, they are cases where the method of giving the pre-charge decision was not been properly completed when the file was registered, or where the case was incorrectly recorded on CMS. This high figure (the national average is 13.9%) makes it difficult to get a true picture of how decisions are made, and also distorts performance data making it difficult for managers to assess how well the scheme is working. The Area is aware of this recording problem but has not yet been able to establish why it is occurring.

- Examples of the police failing to comply with the Director's Guidance by not seeking CPS Staffordshire's authority to charge in all appropriate cases are flagged up by lawyers or DCWs and they are raised by the Unit Heads with the police at Prosecution Team Performance Management (PTPM) meetings. The police provide feedback on action taken to address the failures. The scale of the problem is not clear as there is no analysis of these occurrences.
- The police have introduced a system of charging gatekeepers, who are either serving or retired police officers. Their role is to manage the process of referral of cases by officers to the DP. They should screen out cases which do not meet the criteria for referral, as set out in the Director's Guidance. The quality of gatekeeping contributes to the number of decisions by DPs to take 'no further action' (NFA). The ratio of decisions to charge against decisions to NFA is expected to be about two cases resulting in a charge to one case being recommended for 'no further action'. In 2006-07 the charge to NFA ratio was about one to one; 20% of the NFA cases were due to a conflict of evidence and 24% were due to an essential legal element missing. This indicates that the gatekeeper function is not working as well as it should, resulting in too many weak cases being referred to the DP.
- The police undertake analysis of these cases and they are discussed in general terms at joint performance meetings. Discussion at meetings suggests that there is a lack of understanding of elements of the Director's Guidance, for example in relation to the threshold test (a lower standard than the full Code test, which may be applied to a pre-charge decision if a suspect is required to be kept in custody), and a reluctance to take responsibility for making a decision not to proceed with a case. The Area has provided training to the gatekeepers and Unit Heads have been invited to attend the gatekeepers' monthly meetings, to improve police understanding of the scheme. There has been some improvement in the charge to NFA ratio in the last few months.
- There is an agreed escalation process for cases where there is disagreement between the police and the charging lawyer. If the DP and the officer do not agree the case may be referred to Chief Inspector/Unit Head level and to the Chief Crown Prosecutor (CCP) if the dispute can still not be resolved. The procedure is not frequently invoked and decisions are rarely overturned.
- The police have an electronic tasking system to assist in the management of bail, and this is generally effective in the area covered by the North Area Custody Facility. Reports to the Charging Programme Board, which is a joint CPS and police group, suggest that it works less well in the south of the county. The ongoing case reports produced from the CMS are provided to the police to assist in tracking cases where further action is required. Tasks not completed on time by officers should be referred to their supervisors. At the time of the assessment the list of ongoing cases taken from CMS was lengthy, showing over 370 cases on which there had been no activity for at least 6 weeks. There were 322 cases older than 6 months. The list should be checked weekly by administrative staff and reconciled with police records to ensure that work required is chased up, or that cases which should have been finalised are properly recorded. Although the reports are discussed in general terms at joint performance meetings there does not seem to be a structured approach to managing the ongoing cases in the system.
- The charging programme board also receives reports from the local meetings and instances of failure by the police to comply with actions arising from charging consultations have been addressed at this senior level group. In at least one police division it was reported there was no system in place for retaining MG3 forms provided to officers setting out the DP's decision and action required by the police.

- The tasking system and management by the gatekeepers should ensure that officers consult with the DP in good time before the suspect is due to return to answer bail. However, cases are not always referred to the DP before the bail return date.
- There are facilities for MG3s to be completed electronically in all charging centres. The Area charging guidance includes a section on the use of CMS to record decisions and actions. However, the high number of cases shown as undefined suggests that correct procedures are not always followed. MG3s completed by CPS Direct (CPSD) should be entered on to CMS by the Area, but data indicates in 2006-07 this occurred in only 49% of cases (national average 72%). This is because they were not being correctly entered although this has since been rectified. Reality checks showed that gender and ethnicity is recorded on the MG3 in all cases where it has been provided. Case analysis is generally good, but action plans were only completed in three out of 10 cases examined as part of the reality checks where the decision was to charge and submit an evidential file.
- There is no structured face-to-face liaison with CPSD and issues are raised with them on an ad hoc basis by e-mail. However, copies of the monthly discontinuance reports are supplied to CPSD.
- Conditional cautioning was rolled out in Trent Division in December 2006 led by the police. By March 2007 there had been 11 conditional cautions issued, and by July, with Chase Division included in the project, a further 10. Further guidance has been issued to lawyers. There is no system in place to identify cases which should have been considered for conditional caution, but which have instead been charged by the police. A review of all the conditional cautions so far issued has been carried out by a senior lawyer and general feedback and advice circulated to lawyers as a result.

1b The Area ensures that pre-charge advice and decisions are in accordance with the Director of Public Prosecutions' guidance, the Code for Crown Prosecutors, charging standards and policy guidelines

- All DPs have undertaken Proactive Prosecutor training. National policy documents are circulated by e-mail and discussed at team meetings.
- Unit Heads quality assure a sample of MG3s every month and individual feedback is given to lawyers where necessary. Common omissions include full dated action plans and consideration of victim and witness issues. In the reality checks, POCA issues were considered in one out of two cases where they might have been relevant. Unit Heads observe lawyers in charging centres as part of the monitoring process.
- All decisions to discontinue a PCD case, other than those made by HCAs on their own cases, must be referred to a Unit Head or the CCP, even if they are made in court. Unit Heads report on all cases which are discontinued or where charges are altered and reports are circulated to the Area Management Board (AMB). Feedback is given to individual lawyers where necessary and general lessons learnt are covered in team meetings.
- Recently managers have noted that an element of 'conditional charging' may be re-emerging. This is where DPs authorise a charge on condition that the police will obtain certain evidence, but which the DP has not actually seen. This is not a proper operation of the charging scheme and is contrary to the Director's Guidance.

- The high NFA rate is a cause for concern and is discussed in most PTPM meetings. In one unit some analysis of MG3s has been carried out to establish some trends and feedback has been given to the police. The police undertake some analysis themselves but it is not clear whether any lessons have been learnt. The Area are clear that effective gatekeeping is the key to reducing the number of NFA cases, have assisted in their training and encouraged the police to improve the quality of the personnel assigned to the role. The high number of cases shown as undefined on CMS distorts the data and it is important for the Area to resolve this problem to ensure that they have a clear picture of the outcomes of charging consultations.

1c The Area is able to demonstrate the benefits of their involvement in pre-charge decision-making

	Magistrates' courts cases				Crown Court cases			
	National target March 2007	National performance 2006-07	Area performance		National target March 2007	National performance 2006-07	Area performance	
			2005-06	2006-07			2005-06	2006-07
Discontinuance rate	11.0%	15.7%	17.2%	15.8%	11.0%	13.1%	19.4%	9.1%
Guilty plea rate	52.0%	69.2%	70.4%	70.5%	68.0%	66.5%	70.1%	75.9%
Attrition rate	31.0%	22.0%	22.4%	21.5%	23.0%	22.2%	25.7%	16.7%

- The Area rates as good or excellent in relation to five out of the six key measures, the exception being discontinuance in the magistrate's court. Crown Court discontinuance has improved from 22.5% in the second quarter of 2005-06 to 6.0% in the last quarter of 2006-07. Successful outcomes were achieved in 79.3% of PCD cases (national average 77.9%).
- The Area performance pack includes some data on charging benefits and adverse case reports (including discontinuance). This is circulated to all members of AMB, although it did not contain any meaningful analysis or commentary on guilty plea rates or sanction detection rates.
- PTPM operates strategically through the Charging Programme Board which considers performance and improvement strategies at an Area level. Locally, PTPM meetings are held on a one to one basis between the Unit Heads and police Chief Inspectors. These look at local data, in particular discontinuance and NFA cases; individual cases are looked at and actions for improvement are agreed but there is no detailed trend analysis or local/national comparisons, which would help the prosecution team to identify the reasons for poor performance and to put in place strategies for improvement.
- As well as performance issues the PTPM meetings consider operational and administrative matters which contribute to the successful operation of the charging scheme. Some necessary action is identified. Communication with staff is through team meetings and performance data is displayed in charging centres.

2 ENSURING SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES IN THE MAGISTRATES' COURTS	OPA 2005	OPA 2007	Direction of travel
	Good	Good	Stable

2A Successful outcomes are increasing

Case outcomes in the magistrates' courts	National performance 2006-07	Area performance 2006-07
Discontinuance and bindovers	10.8%	10.9%
No case to answer	0.2%	0.2%
Dismissed after trial	1.9%	2.2%
Discharged committals	0.2%	0.0%
Warrants	2.6%	1.6%
Overall conviction rate	84.3%	85.1%

- The overall conviction rate for magistrates' court cases (85.1%) is better than the national rate (84.3%) and has improved from 78.2% at the time of the last OPA. The guilty plea rate has improved from 67.8% in 2005-06 to 71.6% in 2006-07.
- The rate of all categories of unsuccessful outcomes are set out in the table above. The proportion of cases that end in no case to answer (NCTAs) have remained stable since the 2005 OPA and are the same as national performance. However, the proportion of dismissals after trial has climbed from 1.7% to 2.2%, and is worse than the national average, which has deteriorated itself from 1.5% to 1.9% since 2004-05.
- There has been a significant improvement in the discontinuance rate from the last OPA when at 17.4% it was the second worst rate nationally. Cases now cannot be discontinued without the authority of a Unit Head. The discontinuance rate of 10.9% is now in line with national performance of 10.8% although a reality check of files showed that discontinuance was timely in six out of nine cases.
- The Area conducts a full review of all unsuccessful outcomes. All acquittals are the subject of a report by the advocate, or in the case of an agent conducting the trial by the reviewing lawyer. Unit Heads prepare a monthly report on discontinued cases. Performance is reviewed internally at monthly Area Management Board (AMB) meetings, Unit Head quarterly reviews, and with criminal justice partners at LCJB meetings. Lessons learned are shared with staff at team meetings or where issues are identified relating to a specific member of staff they are addressed on an individual basis.
- The target for offences brought to justice (OBTJ) is shared with other criminal justice agencies and the CPS contributes to this by keeping discontinuances and unsuccessful outcomes low. The OBTJ target for 2006-07 was exceeded; with 48.1% the result of convictions, which is in line with national performance of 48.8%.

- The Area has not met the target in relation to persistent young offenders (PYOs) during 2006-07 with erratic performance throughout the year and many months where performance was worse than target. The average number of days from arrest to sentence for the 12 months ending December 2006 was 73 days. The Chief Crown Prosecutor (CCP), as the LCJB lead, attended an accountability meeting with the Attorney General to examine how performance was being addressed. Through the LCJB a joint agency action plan has been drawn up and there is renewed commitment to improving performance. The CPS has developed their own tracker system and protocol; and early indications are that performance is improving as a result.

2B Effective case management and decision-making enables cases to progress at each court appearance

Trial rates	National performance 2006-07	Area performance 2006-07
Effective trial rate	43.8%	44.6%
Cracked trial rate	37.3%	34.8%
Ineffective trial rate	18.9%	20.6%
Vacated trial rate	22.5%	20.2%

- The quality and timeliness of files received from the police has generally improved since the last OPA when it was noted as an aspect for improvement, although there are still periodic problems in relation to timeliness of submission. Compliance with the Manual of Guidance is monitored through the CQA process by the Area Performance and Projects Manager (APPM) who is the Area champion. Any issues are raised at regular meetings with police counterparts. Further monitoring takes place by Unit Heads when allocating casework or reviewing unsuccessful outcomes.
- The APPM formally monitors case preparation through CQA analysis. Comprehensive reports are produced quarterly which identify trends and highlight other issues such as general file housekeeping. Reality checks show files to be properly reviewed and endorsed with good use being made of an action log for out of court activity.
- During 2006-07 the Area has had two case progression officers (CPOs) in post, one in the South and one in the North of the County. However, the CPOs have also been responsible for line management of the administrative staff in their respective units. The CPS undertake trial readiness checks on all trials but joint agency review of forthcoming trials takes place on an exception basis, for example, where one agency identifies a potential problem with a trial. The Area is intending to review the processes for case progression and the role of the CPOs as part of the full implementation of the Criminal Justice: Simple, Speedy, Summary (CJSSS) initiative.
- CJSSS was rolled out in one police division in August 2007 and is due to take place in the rest of the county in November 2007. There are some indications that there have been an increased number of guilty pleas at first hearing, although it is too early to assess progress fully. It is hoped that CJSSS will improve timeliness and listing issues.

- The CCP is the national CPS champion for youth cases. All youth cases in the Area are reviewed by a youth specialist and where possible prosecuted by them in court. In 2006-07, 78% of youth trials were within the timeliness target, against 89% nationally. In 82% of relevant cases, guilty pleas were entered within the timeliness target against 88% nationally.
- The ineffective trial rate has declined since the last OPA and at 20.6% is worse than national performance. The main reasons for ineffective trials are non-attendance of prosecution witnesses, absence of the defendant and lack of court time. The effective trial rate is 44.6% and better than the national rate of 43.8%, and has improved since the last OPA when it was 40.1%. The cracked trial rate is 34.8% and better than the national figure of 37.3% and the last OPA when it was 40%. The vacated trial rate of 20.2% is better than the national figure of 22.5%.
- The Area analysed all cracked and ineffective trials between July and September 2006 in order to identify the reasons for the dip in performance. A detailed report was produced with recommendations which has been submitted to the LCJB to take forward with a multiagency approach.
- Performance data in relation to cracked and ineffective trials are disseminated to staff at team meetings with guidance, for example to ensure the accuracy of reasons endorsed on the cracked and ineffective monitoring forms.
- The Area's use of CMS to record magistrates' court reviews is improving. As at April 2006, 11.3% of magistrates' court cases had a review recorded on CMS; as at March 2007 this had risen to 90.5%. However, the recording of hearing outcomes and finalisations remain low at 35.1% and 23.2% respectively. The Area attributes this to geographical difficulties in returning the files to the office for up-dating. This can have an impact on other aspects of performance such as the service to victims and witnesses and custody time limits. Although the Area is intending to invest in the installation of CMS in all court centres a more immediate solution is required.

3 ENSURING SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES IN THE CROWN COURT	OPA 2005	OPA 2007	Direction of travel
	Good	Good	Stable

3A Successful outcomes are increasing

Case outcomes in the Crown Court	National performance 2006-07	Area performance 2006-07
Judge ordered acquittals	13.1%	9.4%
Judge directed acquittals	1.4%	1.3%
Acquittals after trial	6.5%	4.9%
Warrants	1.3%	0.6%
Overall conviction rate	77.7%	83.8%

- Performance in relation to successful outcomes is excellent. The number of successful outcomes has increased since the last OPA when the rate was 78.1% to 83.8%
- The rate of judge ordered acquittals (JOAs) at 9.4% is better than the national performance of 13.1% and has improved since the last OPA when it was 14.2%. The rate of judge directed acquittals (JDAs) has remained stable. The number of jury acquittals has improved from 5.1% at the last OPA to 4.9% and is better than national performance.
- The Area operates a policy, where cases can only be discontinued with the agreement of a Unit Head. Where pleas are offered or it is intended to offer no evidence at court the caseworker will ensure that a Unit Head is contacted by telephone before any authorisation to drop a prosecution is given (save in cases where an available Higher Court Advocate (HCA) is also the reviewing lawyer). Performance in relation to discontinuance is reviewed in conjunction with the police at PTPM meetings.
- Comprehensive adverse outcome reports are completed in respect of JOAs, JDAs and jury acquittals. These forms contain the comments of the caseworker, reviewing lawyer and Unit Head and are passed to the CCP each month. They are then incorporated into the Area Performance Pack. Where the Area considers what more could have been done to prevent an unsuccessful outcome, the Unit Head will discuss the case with the individual concerned and complete the 'lessons learned' section of the form. Information is disseminated through distribution of the Performance Pack, at team meetings and on an individual basis.
- The Area exceeded its asset recovery target to obtain 26 orders with a value of £790,509 for 2006-07, obtaining 61 POCA orders and confiscating some £888,055 as proceeds of crime. The Area has a POCA champion in each of the two units who is responsible for identifying appropriate cases for POCA and raising awareness of confiscation. Enforcement meetings are conducted every six weeks or in conjunction with police to monitor progress.

3B Effective case management and decision-making enables cases to progress at each court appearance

Trial rates	National performance 2006-07	Area performance 2006-07
Effective trial rate	48.2%	45.1%
Cracked trial rate	39.5%	43.6%
Ineffective trial rate	12.4%	11.3%

- The Area relies upon monthly CQA checks to monitor the quality of review and preparation of Crown Court files. A reality check of five files showed that full file reviews sometimes added little of value, simply adopting the review considerations of the Duty Prosecutor given in the pre-charge advice. Indictments are prepared on CMS by the lawyers and subsequently produced by the caseworkers, but are not checked prior to being sent to court. Feedback from criminal justice partners was that indictments are not always well drafted, which was confirmed by our reality checks. HCAs are now taking a more active role in this aspect of the work, advising colleagues on form and function.
- The Area has two case progression officers (CPOs), one in the north and one in the south of the county. During 2006-07 they attended weekly case progression meetings with the police and HM Court Service CPOs. However, the effectiveness of these meetings has been diminishing and LCJB has recognised that a review of the role of the CPOs in all agencies needs to be undertaken. The Area has recently agreed with the Resident Judge for mentions to be dealt with administratively in the first instance in order to improve performance and is optimistic that a significant reduction in listings can be achieved during the current year. This is part of a joint strategy in preparation for the implementation of CJSSS.
- The Area has identified HCA youth specialists in both the north and south of the county, who are responsible for conducting all Plea and Case Management Hearings (PCMHS). Youth cases pass through the same case progression mechanism in the Crown Court as do adult defendants and timeliness has dipped below the national average. Recently, however, the Resident Judge at Stafford Crown Court has directed that cases involving children as victims should be prioritised.
- The Area continues to perform well in respect of ineffective trials; the ineffective trial rate at 11.3% is excellent but it has deteriorated since the last OPA when it was 9.9%. The effective trial rate at 45.1% is not as good as the national figure of 48.2% and the cracked trial rate of 43.6 % is also not as good as the national figure of 39.5%.
- The Area conducts a full analysis of all cracked and ineffective trials. Data is included in the Area Performance Pack and considered at Area Management Board and Unit Head meetings. Joint analysis takes place through the LCJB.
- A check on the CMS outstanding tasks list showed a high number of 'escalated' tasks which indicates that the system is not being fully utilised to manage work. This may, in part, be exacerbated by the low number of CMS installations outside the office. The Area achieved 88.7% of full file reviews against a target of 90.0%.

4	PROGRESSING CASES AT COURT	OPA 2005	OPA 2007	Direction of travel
		Good	Good	Stable

4A The Area ensures that cases progress at each court appearance

- Advance information is available and the prosecution is ready to proceed at the first hearing. Where cases were adjourned in our reality check this was invariably at the request of the defence.
- Selection of prosecution advocates for all courts is based on their level of experience. Sensitive cases, such as rapes are allocated to specialist lawyers and counsel and only suitably trained prosecutors cover the domestic violence courts. In accordance with national policy HCAs are used increasingly in the Crown Court, including covering trials. The latest CPS Instructions to Prosecuting Advocates booklet has been circulated to all chambers and agents.
- Court rotas are prepared a month in advance and papers are provided to prosecution advocates at least two days in advance of the hearing date whenever possible to ensure cases can be prepared and presented effectively. HCAs are briefed in the same way as counsel. The quality of instructions to counsel is monitored through Unit Heads' attendance at court and through the CQA process. This has identified that some briefs lack instructions on acceptability of pleas; an aspect for improvement that was confirmed out by our reality checks. Briefs to counsel were timely in 87.6% of cases compared to national performance of 78.7%.
- Prosecutors are expected to attend court at least half an hour before the court sits in order to allow time for appropriate liaison with court staff, police, witnesses and defence solicitors. Attendance is monitored by the Unit Heads attending court and through feedback from legal advisers. There have been no complaints of late attendance.
- Advocates are expected to be proactive in court and to assist in case progression, although (apart from where CJSSS applies) there is no formal policy on this. Reality checks indicated that actions for follow-up are noted and carried out before the next date of hearing. In the magistrates' court this is endorsed on the useful action log; in Crown Court cases court work is kept in a separate folder with the outside of the folder being used to record court directions. Monitoring is carried out by managers' attendance at court, dip sampling and through CQA analysis. The Area also relies on feedback from CJS partners, caseworkers and HCAs.
- There is no systematic advocacy monitoring programme with the Area relying on managers' observations when they prosecute at court themselves or feedback from CPS staff or CJS partners.
- Managers have attended periodic meetings with HM Courts Service during the year to discuss listing arrangements. The Area has attempted to optimise DCW deployment, negotiations are ongoing as the CPS seeks arrangements which would facilitate the exercise by DCWs of their full rights of audience. So far agreement has been reached that trials will not be transferred between court rooms without the prosecutor's agreement and that adequate time will be given to prepare the case. The Crown Court will, where possible, accommodate HCAs by listing all cases prosecuted by the same HCA in one court room.

- The Area does not monitor the overall number of adjournments in the magistrates' courts. The Area has undertaken analysis of ineffective trials in the magistrates' courts. This shows that courts in the north of the Area are more likely to grant defence requests for adjournments than in the south. The Crown Court adjournment rate is better than the national figure.
- There have been no wasted costs orders in the Area in 2006-07.

5 SENSITIVE CASES AND HATE CRIMES	OPA 2005	OPA 2007	Direction of travel
	Excellent	Good	Declined

5A The Area identifies and manages sensitive cases (including hate crime⁴) effectively

- The review and handling of sensitive cases is carried out by appropriate specialists. At PCD sensitive cases are usually submitted to the office and dealt with as a written advice, but where advice is sought on the threshold test a non-specialist duty prosecutor can contact an appropriately qualified colleague for advice. Fatal road traffic incidents are overseen at Unit Head level or above, and the CCP must approve any such case where the advice is to take no further action.
- The Area has appointed champions for all categories of sensitive and hate crime cases. champions provide training and guidance to other prosecutors, engage with the appropriate community groups and criminal justice partners and identify ways to improve performance.
- The domestic violence (DV) coordinator has worked closely with a number of external agencies to set up highly successful specialist domestic violence courts (SDVCs) at Burton-on-Trent, Newcastle-under-Lyme and Cannock Magistrates Courts, which cover all domestic violence cases in Staffordshire. An extensive programme of domestic violence training has been delivered by the DV coordinator.
- Lawyers and DCWs complete reports on cases of media interest or local concern which are forwarded to the Communications Manager to monitor progress and ensure that the CCP is briefed for media comment where necessary. The Area responds proactively to local issues as they arise, for example, by attending residents' associations meetings to allay concerns over the handling of anti-social behaviour on various housing estates.
- Staff are aware of the importance of flagging sensitive cases on CMS, and regular checks are carried out by managers to ensure compliance. The Area also uses coloured coded file-jackets and stickers as a back up system to identify sensitive cases. Reality checks revealed all sensitive cases were flagged appropriately, although in five out of 10 racially aggravated cases no victims had been flagged.
- All changes to CPS policies and casework guidance are disseminated to Unit Heads by the CCP, and are circulated via e-mail or discussed at team meetings. HMCPSI thematic reviews are discussed at the Area Management Board, and champions are expected to assist with implementation of any recommendations. In particular, the rape champion has been proactive in responding to the recent rape thematic report.⁵

⁴ For the avoidance of doubt all references in this aspect to sensitive cases includes all those involving hate crime (disability hate crime, domestic violence, homophobic, racist and religious crime) child abuse/child witnesses, rape, fatal road traffic offences and anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs).

⁵ HMIC/HMCPSI Insepection Thematic Report on the joint review of the investigation and prosecution of rape offences, published 31 January 2007.

- Hate crime cases where there is a reduction in charge or agreed basis of plea should be approved where possible by the Unit Head. Domestic violence and rape cases cannot be discontinued without consulting a specialist. The Area has begun to plan for the introduction of a Hate Crimes Scrutiny Panel.
- The proportion of unsuccessful outcomes in sensitive cases is good and has improved significantly from 44.9% in 2005-06, to 32.9% in 2006-07. This is now better than the national target of 34.0%, and is in line with national performance of 32.8%. The Area's performance also improved in relation to all specific types of hate crime over the same period.
- Apart from rape cases where the champion reviews all finalised rape cases, the Area does not have a specific system for analysing sensitive case outcomes. Performance is monitored through CQA analysis, reviews of adverse outcomes and discontinued cases. The champions for rape, domestic violence and racially aggravated offences all attend regular multiagency meetings where analysis of performance data takes place.
- The Area Business Plan for 2007-08 contains an objective to meet the commitments in the CPS policy on prosecuting cases involving children and young people as victims and witnesses. The number of child abuse specialists has been reviewed and training is planned for later this year. The Area is not represented at the Local Safeguarding Children Board but has a protocol with Stoke Youth Offending Team in relation to offences committed by children in care.

6 DISCLOSURE	OPA 2005	OPA 2007	Direction of travel
	Excellent	Fair	Declined

6A There is compliance with the prosecution's duties of disclosure

- The Area generally complies with its duties of disclosure. A reality check of ten files shows that initial disclosure in the magistrates' court was handled correctly in three out of five files compared to Crown Court cases where initial disclosure was handled properly in two out of five cases. Failures related to poor endorsements on schedules with items marked as 'CND' (clearly not disclosable) or 'D' (disclosable) but with lack of explanation of the decision making process. Examples were also found where items that were potentially undermining were not disclosed at the initial stage. Continuing disclosure was handled better, in three out of five Crown Court files it was handled properly and there was an example of proactive consideration of continuing disclosure in one of the magistrates' court case.
- In all cases apart from one in our sample disclosure was dealt with in a timely manner. In 2006-07 only 0.3% of cases were ineffective in the magistrates' courts due to the prosecution's failure to provide disclosure compared to 1.9% nationally.
- Prosecutors' performance in relation to disclosure is formally assessed by the disclosure champion through CQA. A quarterly report is produced highlighting areas of concern or trends which is considered by the Area Management Board. Learning points are discussed at team meetings and where appropriate feedback is given on an individual basis. In the fourth quarter CQA analysis for 2006-07 90.5% of cases were assessed as meeting the standard for handling unused material which would indicate that assessment is reasonably robust.
- All lawyers and caseworkers have been provided with a copy of the Crown Court protocol and the CCP has discussed compliance with the Resident Judge. Where the advocate does not give affect to the protocol by giving blanket disclosure there is a system in place to draw this to the attention of a manager.
- Reality checks show files to be compliant with the CPS/ACPO (Association of Chief Police Officers) disclosure manual insofar as unused material and disclosure correspondence is kept on a separate folder on the file. The outside cover of the folder has been printed with a checklist of disclosure actions and serves as the disclosure record sheet. Although this was completed in all cases in our sample, and therefore served as a good audit trail, frequently it was only endorsed with the dates the disclosure actions took place and lacked detail as to the reasons why items were being disclosed or withheld.
- Sensitive unused material is kept separate from the main file and stored securely. A log is kept of all public interest immunity applications although these are relatively rare. A third party protocol has been in place since the last OPA for the provision of information by the CPS and police to the Local Authority, but reciprocal arrangements have still not been developed.

- The Area has had a disclosure champion in place since before the last OPA. the champion is responsible for disseminating good practice, monitoring performance, providing training and guidance to lawyers and caseworkers, and has attended the national disclosure champions' conference. the champion has also contributed to police training for probationers and those handling major incidents
- The Area has an ongoing programme of disclosure training. All staff have been trained on the disclosure provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 and the revised CPS/ACPO Disclosure Manual. New staff receive basic disclosure training and refresher training is in the process of being arranged. Advanced training has been delivered to some lawyers with further dates to be set. However despite this, similar failings in handling unused material are identified in each quarterly performance report and as a result the champion is now intending to undertake a specific disclosure monitoring exercise.

7 CUSTODY TIME LIMITS	OPA 2005	OPA 2007	Direction of travel
	Good	Fair	Declined

7A Area custody time limit systems comply with current CPS guidance and case law

- The Area has a written custody time limit (CTL) system which complies with national guidelines and incorporates good practice. Guidance was updated in 2005 and includes actions to be taken on calculation, return of files to the office after court and monitoring, but instructions relating to file endorsement do not include a requirement to record the review date on the file. The CTL champion has provided structured training and some coaching to groups and individual members of staff.
- The Area's CTL champion is a Unit Head and sits on the Area Management Board (AMB). The 2005 OPA included an aspect for improvement for the Area to develop a protocol with the magistrates' courts to agree and monitor CTL expiry dates. The Area champion has recently secured agreement with the magistrates' courts for a CTL protocol which will involve the courts in the calculation and agreement of CTL expiry dates.
- Our reality check of six CTL files indicated that systems are generally complied with in all units, although there is no evidence that CTL expiry dates are calculated by the prosecutor at court. All CTL calculations had been checked by another officer with endorsements on both the file and the office diary to this effect. In one case however, a CTL expiry date was recorded on an orange coloured sensitive case sticker to which there is no reference in Area systems.
- The Area has had one CTL failure in 2006-07, although the defendant remained in custody on other matters. Data provided by CPS Headquarters shows that this failure was not reported, although the unit concerned did report it in its quarterly performance report to the CCP and ABM. The unit report and the file notes examining the failure did not address the fact that counsel was not advised of the application to extend the CTLs and CMS was not updated to show a hearing scheduled or the expiry date. The Area needs to ensure that any failures are properly reported and lessons learned.
- The Area has had an arrangement with the Crown Court to the effect that cases are automatically listed before a CTL expiry. Quarterly unit performance reports include confirmation by Unit Heads as to the soundness of systems, and where necessary, report any failures in the period. Some unit meetings also include CTLs as a standing agenda item but usually only insofar as to report to staff that there had been no failures in the period.
- CMS task list checks are used as a back-up to the manual diary systems but are not used consistently across the Area. The use of task lists to assist in checking files where expiry is imminent relies on CMS information being up to date and accurate, which is not always the case as there are delays in updating CMS following court hearings.

8 THE SERVICE TO VICTIMS AND WITNESSES	OPA 2005	OPA 2007	Direction of travel
	Good	Fair	Declined

8A The Area ensures timely and effective consideration and progression of victim and witness needs

- Each office has a Case Information Bureau (CIB), which acts as a focal point for victims and witnesses who may be referred by the Witness Care Unit (WCU) for sentences to be explained or meetings arranged with a prosecutor. CIB staff are responsible for drafting discontinuance notices and letters to victims under the Direct Communication with Victims Scheme (DCV). There are systems in place to identify victims and ensure compliance with the DCV initiative. In 2006-07, 76% of letters were sent within the target five days of the decision being made (national average 73%), which was below the performance achieved in 2005-06 (83%). Against the proxy target indicating the number of letters which should be sent, performance improved during 2006-07 from 55-65% to 83-112% by the end of the year. The fact that the Area appeared able to exceed 100% at times suggests that the proxy target may be artificially low. That was a frequent finding in the HMCPSP audit of DCV compliance, albeit Staffordshire was not one of the Areas audited.
- In our reality checks on CMS, letters were written in only four out of seven cases where they were required by the scheme.
- There are no structured management checks on the quality of letters to victims, although many are signed by Unit Heads when lawyers are out of the office. The letters examined as part of this assessment were generally of adequate standard although one was found which failed to offer the victim a mandatory meeting.
- Desk top instructions on responsibilities relating to victims and witnesses were issued to all staff in February 2007. These include guidance on DCV, the Victims Code, the Prosecutors Pledge, special measures and Victim Personal Statements. There is also a quick reference laminated checklist.
- A protocol for the Victims Code has been signed by all agencies on the LCJB and the magistrates' courts have produced a document setting out responsibilities in practical terms, of which the Area is a signatory.
- Use of CMS to identify victims with special needs is poor. This is a classic cause of Areas failing to identify the need to send DCV letters; and it is also likely to result in artificially low targets being set. In our reality checks of racially aggravated cases only 5 out of 10 had victim flags entered and in the checks on discontinued PCD cases only 2 out of 7 relevant cases were correctly flagged.
- Consideration of the needs of victims and witnesses is not always timely or effective. Quality assurance of MG3s undertaken by Unit Heads indicates there is not always full consideration of witness issues at pre-charge stage. Statement forms (MG11s) submitted by the police do not routinely have full details of witness requirements on the reverse (68% were not satisfactory in the sample examined in the final handover review of the WCUs). The need for special measures

for vulnerable or intimidated witnesses is often not addressed until requirements are flagged up by the WCU and applications are then made late. The Area acknowledges that it does not identify all vulnerable and intimidated victims in a timely fashion. This means it is not able to fulfil its obligations under the Victims Code, for example notifying vulnerable or intimidated witnesses of decisions to discontinue a case or change charges, within 24 hours of the decision.

- Processes have been redesigned to improve the flow of information between CPS Staffordshire staff and the WCU but these are not wholly effective. CMS is not available at court centres so information on court results has to be faxed to the WCU and the system is not updated within the time limits necessary for the WCUs to meet its obligations under the Victims Code.
- Witnesses are warned for court attendance by the WCUs. A link to the police rostering system (CARMS) has been installed in court rooms, so that 'real time' availability of officers can be checked, and the trial date immediately entered on to the police tasking system. In accordance with the Service Level Agreement signed by all agencies involved, the Area undertake to provide information on witnesses to be warned or de-warned, electronically to the police and to the WCU within agreed timescales. However there are sometimes delays in respect of witnesses to be warned for Crown Court and there have also been some difficulties in ensuring that information from the WCU to about potential witness problems reaches the right prosecutor or caseworker, in good time.
- Feedback from the Witness Service indicates that witnesses are generally satisfied with the level of communication prior to their court attendance and 98.9% of witness expense claims were paid within 10 days of receipt.
- All lawyers and agents have been given a copy of the Prosecutors Pledge. There is no formal monitoring and compliance is assumed to be adequate in the absence of complaints from other court users or victims and witnesses. Waiting times for witnesses at court are better than the national average.

8B The Area, with its criminal justice partners, has implemented the No Witness No Justice scheme (NWNJ) effectively

- The Area has two WCUs, one in each office. They are staffed mainly by police and both have a police manager, but there are three CPS witness care officers in each. The police have incorporated their former witness support units into the structure to deal with sensitive cases involving vulnerable and intimidated witnesses. There are some unresolved management issues within the unit around management style and differences in conditions of service of staff from the two agencies. There is no formal mechanism for these to be raised, although issues are discussed informally by the ABM, with colleagues in the police criminal justice department.
- The final handover review conducted by the national No Witness No Justice (NWNJ) team in October 2006 highlighted a number of achievements, including commitment of the WCU staff to service delivery. Issues to address included prioritisation of vulnerable and intimidated witnesses and awareness of the role of the WCU amongst other staff and agencies.

- The Area is meeting some of the minimum requirements. Although the systems and processes are in place there are failings in relation to continuing contact with victims and witnesses, timeliness of notification of results, and managing the volume of work. This means that the full service is not always provided to all witnesses, although victims of crime are prioritised.
- The witness management system (WMS), accessed via the police IT system is used to manage cases and to provide management information. Data taken from WMS, CMS and management information system (MIS) is provided to senior managers in the Area, to the police, and to the WCU managers. Witness nonattendance and retraction continues to be a major reason for cracked and ineffective trials. Attendance rates have fallen from a high of 100% in December 2005 to 71% in October 2006, climbing back to 78% in December 2006 against the national average of 83%. In the Crown Court performance is improving in respect of ineffective trials due to witness issues.
- Data on secondary measures is limited, and is not routinely provided to senior managers, although it can be collected via WMS.
- Performance was discussed at the NWNJ Project Board whilst that existed. However, since WCUs became 'business as usual' the Project Board has been discontinued in favour of local resolution of problems. This has left a vacuum at a strategic level in respect of broader performance and policy issues for the WCUs. The LCJB delegates responsibility for the units to its victim and witness sub-group at which the Area is represented by the APPM. The group does not routinely consider performance but looks at process, management and resources issues in the units. The Area intends to re-introduce an area wide joint management group for the WCUs, but the intention is that it should be at an operational level, chaired by one of the WCU managers, rather than at a strategic policy-making level.
- Communication to staff about the WCU is generally through team meetings. The CIB in each office works closely with the WCU but there is no formal liaison between the WCU managers and Area managers.

9 DELIVERING CHANGE	OPA 2005	OPA 2007	Direction of travel
	Good	Fair	Declined

9A The Area has a clear sense of purpose supported by relevant plans

- The Area business plan (ABP) sets out the Area priorities and business objectives. It is aligned to the 15 national key business priorities and Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets. A summary was published in the Area's in-house newsletter, published every two months. The ABP is supported by other more detailed plans for specific aspects of the business, for example learning and development (L&D) and equality and diversity (E&D). Both the ABP and detailed plans outline responsibilities for delivery of milestones and objectives. The ABP also includes a risk register.
- Regular review of the ABP by senior managers is not evident. The Area is mainly reliant on its performance management reporting system for reviewing progress against quantitative targets; many of the ABP milestones are not expressed as measurable targets. This lack of clear review and reliance on performance information was also the case for detailed plans.
- Planning for the delivery of specific initiatives, such as office restructuring and relocation, and the roll-out of conditional cautioning, needed more detail and did not outline success criteria or expected benefits. The 2006-07 ABP did not cover the roll-out of conditional cautioning in the Area, which commenced in December 2006.
- The Area decided not produce separate unit plans as the ABP and detailed plans clearly outlined Area priorities. Individual job plans should relate to Area objectives; examples of staff objectives seen were not clearly linked to Area priorities or targets. However, the publication of performance summaries to all staff should enable them to have a clear view of what the Area and their own unit is required to achieve. The 2006 staff survey confirmed that Area staff had higher than average perceptions about their role and how they are linked to Area objectives, but a lack of clear links between Area, team and individual objectives may result in inconsistent priorities developing.
- There is some bilateral planning with partners for delivery of core LCJB priorities. The Area has worked with CJS colleagues to look at the impacts of the CJSSS initiative; however local CPS plans have limited detailed planning for delivery of its elements. There was also a lack of post-implementation monitoring of the joint roll-out of WCUs in the Area. As soon as the WCU became business as usual any LCJB project support arrangements were withdrawn. There has been no effective review and monitoring or assessment made of the anticipated business benefits. This issue has been latterly identified and moves have been made to reintroduce supporting arrangements.

9B A coherent and co-ordinated change management strategy exists

- The Area has not established formalised project management reporting systems. Business benefits of projects implemented are not clear and the Area is over reliant on performance data for evaluating change. The lack of clear business benefits and formal review mechanisms may play a part in the Area decision to reverse decisions taken on Area structures within five months of the completion of the final phase of implementation. The change has been driven in part by observations by managers as to the limited success of these changes and by feedback from CPS

Headquarters following a review by the Business Development Division. However, without formal project monitoring and review, the Area could not clearly demonstrate whether the revised structure was delivering expected benefits. The Area needs to revise its approach to change to ensure that it is planned, monitored and assessed in an effective manner.

- Conditional cautioning has been rolled out at two locations in the Area, with police partners taking the lead in its implementation. A senior CPS representative attends implementation meetings and has run joint training sessions for police and CPS staff. There are no formal CPS implementation plans at Area level. Area managers reported that there had been 21 conditional cautions issued since December 2006. Area managers acknowledge that the successful implementation of CJSSS across the whole Area will require attention to resolve the planning, resourcing and partnership issues involved.
- The Area's 2007 Learning and Development strategy incorporates a plan that takes account of local and national priorities such as staff training in performance management (Invest), higher court advocacy and preparation for conditional cautioning. Regular structured updates to the Area Management Board (AMB) against training objectives indicate that joint training on conditional cautioning for CPS lawyers and police counterparts was provided as scheduled.
- Area risks are broadly identified and outlined in the ABP. It is unclear if and how effectively risk is reviewed as there was no evidence of the plan being reviewed. Risks, ratings and countermeasures remained largely unchanged between the 2006-07 and 2007-08 registers, with the latter register not including risks associated with the roll-out of CJSSS in the Area. The Area needs to ensure that risks are considered on a more structured and formalised basis.

9c The Area ensures staff have the skills, knowledge and competences to meet the business need

- In developing Area training priorities for the year, the Area's L&D Manager undertakes training needs analysis that is built around completed staff personal development plans. The L&D strategy and plan is also linked to Area priorities as shown in the ABP. The L&D manager is responsible for implementing the training plans and provides regular updates to the AMB. The reports and training logs provided indicate that more training is provided than identified in Area training plan.
- The AMB, working in conjunction with the ABM led E&D group, identified the need for up-to-date, discrete E&D training for all Area staff during 2007-08. This had been completed at the time of this OPA. Feedback received from staff following the delivery of the initial sessions led to proactive steps being taken by the Area to ensure that the course was tailored to meet Area needs.
- The Area developed its own in-house induction programme in 2006-07 following delays in securing places on national induction courses for new staff. Training is provided to both lawyer and non-lawyer staff and training logs identified that key mandatory training had been delivered. Various methods are used to deliver training including coaching and mentoring, as well as through classroom based training courses. This is identified as strength in the 2006 Investors in People (iP) review report. Individual staff circumstances are balanced against business needs in making training arrangements.
- In 2006-07, the Area identified the need to develop its systems for the evaluation of training to provide it with information to quantify the benefits of training. Including how training resulted in improved performance of individuals, whether it supported Area objectives and what the cost of the training is to the Area. This evaluation process has yet to be developed and implemented.

10 MANAGING RESOURCES	OPA 2005	OPA 2007	Direction of travel
	Fair	Good	Improved

10A The Area seeks to achieve value for money and operates within budget

- In 2005-06 and 2006-07, the Area operated within its administration costs budget, with out turn at 99.9% and 99.5%. In 2006-07 out turn on prosecution costs and administration costs combined was also within budget at 99.1%, having been at 102.9% of budget in 2005-06.
- Value for money principles have been adopted in respect of general administration expenditure and branch office managers are encouraged to obtain supplies from the most economical source. Caseworkers are expected to negotiate expert's fees wherever possible and may not seek advice from counsel or require their attendance at conferences without the approval of CCP or Unit Head.
- Administrative expenditure is largely controlled by the ABM, with responsibility for lawyer agents and travel and subsistence only being devolved to Unit Heads. Unit Heads are responsible for management of the prosecutions costs budgets. There is only limited discussion of the budget at either AMB or monthly Unit Head meetings and written reports on expenditure or forecast outturn are not routinely provided to Unit Heads.
- Committed expenditure on agents is monitored and a spreadsheet provided by CPS Headquarters is used to forecast and monitor salaries costs. Local records are checked monthly against the reports provided from the CPS accounting system, and any errors in coding are reported to the CPS Headquarters Finance Business Centre. Expenditure on prosecution costs is monitored in the Area Secretariat using the reports from the national accounting system.
- The Area has chosen not to have a dedicated fees clerk and the calculation of counsels fees under the graduated fee scheme (GFS) is carried out by either caseworkers or administrative staff. Any unusual or exceptional payments are referred to a trial unit manager or in some cases to the ABM. Timeliness of payment of fees dropped towards the end of the year, with only 48% of fees paid in March 2007 relating to cases finalised during February and March (national average 50%) and 72% being for cases finalised in the previous 4 months. Previously performance had reached 74% in respect of payments for cases in the previous 2 months and up to 99% for cases in the previous 4 months. The Area attribute the dip in performance to the office move which took place in the south unit in March 2007, and some large Crown Court cases being received at much the same time, which distracted attention from payment of fees.
- Savings made on counsels' fees as a result of the use of HCA in the Crown Court have been used to fund the salaries of additional lawyers and DCWs. Additional funding for the NWNJ initiative has enabled the Area to maintain posts in the WCUs.

10B The Area has ensured that all staff are deployed efficiently

- Resources are allocated to the units at the start of the financial year, taking into account the Area business plan and any anticipated initiatives. Options are costed by the Area Business Manager, using the CPS Headquarters salaries costs spreadsheet and are discussed with the Unit Heads, so that a consensus is reached. The CCP contributes to the discussion, ensuring that account is taken of broader strategic issues as well as purely financial considerations.
- The allocation of resources takes into account the indicative staffing requirements from the activity based costing (ABC) system calculations as well as court and charging commitments. The allocation agreed at the start of the year is not formally reviewed by the AMB, although, where necessary, members of staff are moved between teams and units, for example because of short or medium term absences or particularly heavy caseload demands.
- Lawyers, and DCWs are expected to spend 60-70% of their working week in court or at charging centres, as appropriate, although this target is not always achieved. In 2006-07 14.6% of magistrates' court sessions were covered by agents (national average 19.6%), against a target of 10.0% (the lower figure being better).
- Recently the Area has reviewed the role of case progression officers (CPOs) and is planning to recruit a further two CPOs so that in the units dealing with magistrates court cases a CPO will assist lawyers in case management, for example dealing with simple correspondence. This will free up lawyer time for court coverage, thereby making savings on agents' usage.
- The Area has a full-time equivalent of 7.6 DCWs. They covered 19% of courts in 2006-07, against a target of 20%. On average they undertook 4.3 sessions per week in court, which equates to 79% of the maximum number of sessions possible if all DCWs were fully deployed. One DCW received facility time for trade union duties during the year, thereby reducing total available sessions. DCWs cover all courts available to them, with the occasional exception when they are covered by new lawyers as part of their training and induction programme. The Area has been unable to agree a satisfactory listing pattern with the courts in the north of the county that would maximise their ability to deploy DCWs in that part of the county. The CCP is pursuing this with the Area Director of HM Court Service. DCWs are seconded to the other unit, or undertake duties assisting in the Crown Court or supporting lawyers on magistrates' courts work in the office.
- HCA's work within the units rather than as a separate team. At the start of 2006-07 there were eight HCA's, which by the time of the assessment had increased to 14, with another three undertaking training. In 2006-07 HCA's covered 28 trials as sole advocate and five as junior to leading counsel. They also cover most committals for sentence and appeals hearings and about 85% of Plea and Case Management hearings (PCMHs). The Area believe that this has resulted not only in savings on counsel's fees, but an increase in the number of guilty pleas being entered. Gross savings in 2006-07 on counsel's fees were £160,144, against a target of £84,357. The average saving per session was £430.49 (national average £338.96).
- In 2006-07 the average number of days sick absence per person was 7.5 (target 7 days) with 39.4% of this being as a result of long term sickness, lower than the national average of 52.8%. Managers are proactive in addressing long term absence and seek assistance from the HR Advisor and occupational health support, and try to stay in touch with members of staff who are

absent for lengthy periods. The ABM follows up any absence warning prints received from HR, to ensure that line managers are actively dealing with any issues. Training has been provided to managers on management of sick absence.

- The Area has a number of staff who work flexibly. Examples include compressed hours and school hours. No application has been turned down, but discussions are held with any applicant to ensure that their proposed working pattern meets the business need as well as those of the individual. The working pattern is reviewed if the member of staff moves to a new role, to ensure that it is still compatible with the business need.

11 MANAGING PERFORMANCE TO IMPROVE	OPA 2005	OPA 2007	Direction of travel
	Good	Fair	Declined

11A Managers are accountable for performance and performance information is accurate and timely

- A performance pack is produced monthly and circulated to AMB members and to middle managers. A single page summary of performance against key targets is included and is also placed on the public drive on the IT network and on office notice boards. The pack is a collection of data taken from various local and national sources. It does not include any analysis or commentary. Adverse outcome reports are also attached to the pack and are circulated.
- The pack does not include data on some key aspects of work such as charging benefits, case outcomes, witness care, casework quality assurance or PYOs and there is only limited information on trends, or comparisons between units or with other areas. The Area also circulates to managers the performance pack produced by CPS Headquarters which provides Area comparisons, but this is not tailored to local needs.
- The AMB does not have regular structured discussion on performance, although there is debate on an ad hoc basis as and when issues arise. Key aspects of performance are reported at team meetings and there is a strong focus on the actions required to improve performance within the team. These meetings are minuted and copies of the minutes provided to team members who are not present, to ensure that messages are comprehensively delivered.
- Quarterly performance meetings are held by the CCP and ABM with each Unit Head. A commentary on performance prepared by the Unit Head is used as the basis of discussion. Actions are agreed and it is expected that they will be completed prior to the subsequent quarter, but they are not formally recorded.
- The ABM has regular meetings with operational managers in the units. A summary of performance is provided to the meetings and there is some discussion around improvement of systems and processes although the agendas focus mainly on administrative matters.
- All adverse outcomes are checked on CMS to ensure accurate recording, and correct use of CMS is also checked against the files examined as part of the casework quality assurance process, but there are no systematic management checks on other data.
- There is no systematic or periodic review of processes but there have been ad hoc reviews in relation to specific projects on a thematic basis, for example the WCUs, for which new processes were designed. There has also been an in-depth review of the reasons for cracked and ineffective trials and a review of compliance with guidance on the handling of rape cases.

- Responsibility for performance in the units rests with the Unit Heads, although the ABM has day-to-day responsibility for operational effectiveness. Monitoring of casework quality is a shared role between the Unit Heads and the Area Performance and Projects Manager (APPM), but improvement action is the responsibility of the Unit Heads.

11B The Area is committed to managing performance jointly with CJS partners

- Unit Heads meet regularly with their police counterparts at chief inspector level to discuss all aspects of performance with respect to the police/CPS interface. They focus particularly on the prosecution team and issues around charging. PTPM reports are provided for the police performance meetings and data from both agencies is shared at those meetings. As well as looking at data the meetings consider failed cases on an individual basis and are proactive in agreeing action for improvement.
- The courts are not represented at the meetings with the police and there is no arrangement for regular discussion of performance at unit level with the courts or with other agencies. Unit Heads attend magistrates' Court User Groups and the CCP attends the Crown Court User Group but their purpose is not seen as driving improvement.
- Domestic violence groups, with representation from all CJS agencies and local authorities are being established around the specialist domestic violence courts. They are considered to be effective in managing performance in this area of work.
- The Area is represented at senior management level on all the LCJB sub-groups. The ABM is a member of the sub-group on performance, which oversees other sub-groups. The LCJB performance officer produces a comprehensive performance report monthly, which is presented to the performance group. There is discussion, but few performance improvement actions are generated. The performance report is also circulated to managers in the Area.
- The CCP, ABM and APPM regularly meet with senior officers from the police criminal justice department on an informal basis. Minutes of these meetings are not taken.
- A strategy was implemented jointly with the police, courts and YOTs to improve performance against the PYO target and performance is showing signs of improvement. Fortnightly tracker meetings manage cases on an individual basis. Following the final handover review of the Witness Care Units a joint action plan was agreed by the Area with the police, and although it has not been formally signed off by the LCJB, progress has been made towards completing some of the actions.

11c Internal systems for ensuring the quality of casework and its prosecution at court are robust and founded on reliable and accurate monitoring and analysis

- CQA forms for the whole Area are completed by the APPM. This ensures thoroughness because of the time that can be given to the task and that there is a common approach. In 2006-07 the Area consistently returned more than the minimum number of forms required by CPS Headquarters, which is one per lawyer or DCW per month.

- The forms are passed to the Unit Heads for action. They discuss the CQA findings in general terms in team meetings, focusing particularly on common issues raised by the analysis, typically poor identification of victim and witness issues, late responses to correspondence and lack of consideration of alternative pleas in briefs. If the assessment identifies areas for improvement or good work in respect of individual lawyers those are taken up with them on a one-to-one basis by the Unit Head.
- The Area CQA returns in 2006-07 to CPS Headquarters generally assessed performance in relation to Code decisions and charging standards as better than national performance despite the issues referred to above; albeit clear weaknesses were identified in relation to victim and witness issues. Performance has not improved during the year and in the March quarter of 2006-07, only 55.8% of files were assessed as meeting the required standard as far as victims and witnesses are concerned. CQA is not included in the monthly performance pack provided to managers but quarterly reports highlighting themes emerging from the analysis are submitted to AMB. There is no evidence of targeted actions arising from any discussion, even though similar weaknesses are identified every time.
- Advocacy monitoring has been restricted to new lawyers and those about whom managers have some concerns. Agents in the magistrates' court are not monitored unless adverse reports are received about their performance from other court users. Counsel in the Crown Court are monitored by caseworkers for re-grading purposes and also to inform decisions about future allocation of work. The Area intends to expand its monitoring of in-house lawyers during 2008-09.

12 LEADERSHIP	OPA 2005	OPA 2007	Direction of travel
	Good	Good	Stable

12A The management team communicates the vision, values and direction of the Area well

- The Area's vision, values and direction are set out clearly in leaflet form, which is available to staff and the local communities. It adopts the overarching vision and values of the service. The foreword to the Area Business Plan (ABP) for 2007-08 includes references to the Area's vision and values.
- The Area performance management framework ensures that managers are accountable for delivery of Area objectives. Unit Heads are accountable for unit performance and meet quarterly with the CCP and ABM in a system that mirrors the CPS Area performance reporting structure. The members of the Area Management Board (AMB) with lead responsibility for each objective are identified in the ABP. There are regular monthly meetings of the AMB which are generally rotated between the Area's two offices, as well as meetings between the ABM and the Unit Heads, where key issues are discussed. Although the ABP does not focus on milestones, arrangements described above allow the Area to hold managers to account against specific performance targets. Area systems could be improved if plans outlined clear benefits realisation outcomes which were assessed through the Area's performance regime.
- Area training days are attended by all staff once a year and serve as a forum for the AMB to update staff on Area performance as well as initiating consultations for business planning in the following year. The minutes of regularly held team meetings also include briefings on immediate past AMB meetings aimed at cascading key messages. This ensures that there is consistency in the messages delivered to the various units. The rotation of AMB meetings enables the CCP and ABM to interact with all staff and ensure that key messages are being delivered consistently across the Area.
- The 2006 staff survey showed that Area staff were substantially more satisfied than average with the regularity (Area 86%; national 59%) and effectiveness (Area 57%; national 55%) of team meetings. These results were also borne out by findings of the 2006 Investors in People (IIP) recognition review. Quarterly unit reports by Unit Heads to the CCP require confirmation that unit meetings have been held. The scheduling of regular team meetings enables the occasional attendance by the CCP and ABM and this facilitates dialogue between staff and senior management.
- Previous attempts at establishing an Area Sounding Board for staff engagement met with little success; there was a lack of interest from Area staff. The IIP review suggests that managers take proactive steps to develop this as a means for staff engagement. High-level plans for the relocating of both Area offices during 2006-07 included prior meetings with lawyer teams and managers at each location and arrangements put in place in March 2007 to deal with issues arising from both moves, involved the creation of 'sounding boards'. These were made up of various staff cadres and have been established solely for the purpose of addressing issues relating to the move into new accommodation. Issues identified were then collated and passed on to the ABM for his written response or comments.

- Senior managers participate at LCJB level with all AMB members being designated representatives at appropriate levels. The CCP is vice chair of the LCJB. Other managers participate in delivery and sub-groups. Performance information is shared with criminal justice partners. CPS managers promote service priorities in dialogue with partner agencies, although the level to which the CPS has successfully engaged with partners and stakeholders to meet Area objectives has varied with each partner organisation, and with each of the two Area locations.
- The Area has reviewed the success or otherwise of initiatives using performance information. The limited success of previous Area restructuring has had a bearing on its future restructuring proposals, with senior managers acknowledging business needs were not being met.

12B 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 CCP and ABM have sent e-mails to staff who have contributed to successful outcomes such as through advocacy in court or case progression. Compliments paid by external parties are also forwarded to staff with further appreciation by the CCP noted. In response to findings from the staff survey and lIP review in 2006, the Area established a Reward and Recognition scheme in July 2007 to recognise performance based on established standards. Rewards include a mixture of financial and non-financial awards.
- There have been no substantiated complaints made by staff about their treatment by managers. Area managers gave examples of instances where they had dealt with staff for acting in an inappropriate manner. Firm action has also been taken to address concerns relating to the inappropriate treatment of staff by colleagues in a partner agency. To prevent further incidents, the Area has ensured that all staff have copies of the CPS 'Dignity at Work' booklet. Equality and diversity (E&D) training and re-fresher training was also held for all staff during 2006-07.
- The ABM is the Area's E&D champion and chairs Area E&D group meetings which are held at least twice a year. The group takes the lead on implementing and monitoring E&D objectives in the ABP and the associated E&D plan. As with the Area's community engagement strategy, some of the measures identified in the E&D plan are difficult to attribute to the activities planned. It could also be improved by ensuring that it clearly complies with the national single equalities scheme on issues such as age discrimination. There are examples of good practice such as requiring managers to be proactive in encouraging staff to declare disability status where appropriate.
- The composition of Area staff is reflective of the overall workforce in the county. The identical objectives in the Area's workforce diversity plans for 2006-07 and 2007-08 indicate limited success in progressing actions in the earlier period. The recommendations made by the CPS E&D unit in the last quarter of 2005-06 did not appear to have been implemented with regard to increased development opportunities for women in lower grades, as well as the disaggregation of joint targets for disabled staff at C1 and C2 levels. Progress against the Area workforce representation development plan does not feature in AMB minutes or in Area business plan reviews.
- The recent relocation of both Area offices presented managers with an opportunity to ensure that seating and working environments discouraged exclusivity. In the 2006 staff survey 64% of staff who responded considered they were treated with fairness and respect compared with 63% nationally. Similarly, 92% of respondents (a significant increase from 79% in 2004) worked well with colleagues compared to 91% nationally.

13 SECURING COMMUNITY CONFIDENCE	OPA 2005	OPA 2007	Direction of travel
	Good	Good	Stable

13A The Area is working proactively to secure the confidence of the community

- The Area and its managers are committed to improving confidence of the community and in order to focus its community engagement (CE) activity better. The Area has developed a CE strategy. The strategy complements the Area Business Plan where high level community engagement objectives are set out, although the links between the CE strategy and Area priorities, and logged activity were not clear. Whilst there is some joint working with the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB), the Area is currently focussed on taking steps to deliver against its own strategy.
- The 2006-07 ABP allocates CE responsibilities to the CCP, ABM and the Area Communication Manager (ACM). Area CE logs for 2006-07 and 2007-08 indicate that senior managers and other staff have attended engagement events, in particular, the CCP, ACM and the Area's DV champion. Between them they undertake a significant number of engagements. The Area DV champion has also developed links with appropriate community groups and is particularly active.
- There were 38 engagements recorded in 2006-07, over half of which were targeted at creating awareness of the role of the CPS and improving its profile. The other events were of a consultative nature and the rest involved participation in events. The Area focus has been mainly on racial and hate crimes, including domestic violence. There was limited involvement by a wider range of staff, although there are signs that this is improving. There is very limited reference to CE activity, monitoring or evaluation in AMB and team meetings. However, the Area newsletter, published every two months, regularly features community engagements undertaken as well as any feedback received from the target audience. Job plans provided by the Area indicate that the Area decision to include a personal objective in respect of community engagement for all staff has not been implemented fully.
- The Area has up-to-date information on county demographics which shows Muslims and people of Pakistani origin as the largest single grouping of minorities categorised by faith and ethnic origin. Area managers have also identified Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) and traveller sections of the community as its most excluded groups. The Area CE strategy does not set out related objectives aimed at enhancing contacts with any of these groups, although the Equality and Diversity action plan for 2006-07 does contain an objective in relation to the LGBT groups.
- The Area has not always been able to demonstrate a clear relationship between engagement activity and adjustments to the local approach or improvements in services or outcomes although Area performance in respect of cases involving hate crime, and domestic violence in particular, is good and improving. There is evaluation of CE activities undertaken to ensure fit with Area strategy and business objectives.
- Public confidence in the criminal justice system in bringing offenders to justice in Staffordshire has dropped from 43.3% in June 2005 to 40.6% at the end of 2006 against a LCJB target of 45% for 2006-07. LCJB plans are in place to address this through the public confidence delivery group of which the CPS is a partner.

ANNEXES

A PERFORMANCE DATA

Aspect 1: Pre-charge decision-making

	Magistrates' courts cases				Crown Court cases			
	National target March 2007	National performance 2006-07	Area performance		National target March 2007	National performance 2006-07	Area performance	
			2005-06	2006-07			2005-06	2006-07
Discontinuance rate	11.0%	15.7%	17.2%	15.8%	11.0%	13.1%	19.3%	9.1%
Guilty plea rate	52.0%	69.2%	70.4%	70.5%	68.0%	66.5%	70.1%	75.9%
Attrition rate	31.0%	22.0%	22.4%	21.5%	23.0%	22.2%	25.7%	16.7%

	National performance 2006-07	Area performance 2006-07
Charged pre-charge decision cases resulting in a conviction	78.0%	79.3%

Aspect 2: Ensuring successful outcomes in the magistrates' courts

	National performance 2006-07	Area performance 2006-07
Successful outcomes (convictions) as a percentage of completed magistrates' courts cases	84.3%	85.1%

Trial rates	National performance 2006-07	Area performance 2006-07
Effective trial rate	43.8%	44.6%
Cracked trial rate	37.3%	34.8%
Ineffective trial rate	18.9%	20.6%
Vacated trial rate	22.5%	20.2%

Overall persistent young offender (PYO) performance (arrest to sentence)

National target	National performance 2006	Area performance 2006
71 days	72 days	73 days

Offences Brought to Justice

	CJS area target 2006-07	CJS area performance 2006-07
Number of offences brought to justice	24,464	28,612

Percentage make up of Offences Brought to Justice	National 2006-07	Criminal justice area 2006-07
Offences taken into consideration (TICs)	8.5%	7.9%
Penalty notices for disorder (PNDs)	10.3%	8.8%
Formal warnings	5.8%	4.6%
Cautions	26.5%	30.7%
Convictions	48.8%	48.1%

Aspect 3: Ensuring successful outcomes in the Crown Court

	National performance 2006-07	Area performance 2006-07
Successful outcomes (convictions) as a percentage of completed Crown Court cases	77.7%	83.8%

Trial rates	National performance 2006-07	Area performance 2006-07
Effective trial rate	48.2%	45.1%
Cracked trial rate	39.5%	43.6%
Ineffective trial rate	12.4%	11.3%

Proceeds of Crime Act orders	Area target 2006-07	Area performance 2006-07
Value	£790,509	£888,055
Number	26	61

Aspect 10: Managing resources

	2005-06	2006-07
Non ring-fenced administration costs budget outturn	99.95%	99.54%

Staff deployment	National target 2006-07	National performance 2006-07	Area performance 2006-07
DCW deployment (as % of magistrates' courts sessions)	17.2%	14.7%	19.0%
HCA savings against Area target	100%	138.4%	189%
Sickness absence (per employee per year)	7.5 days	8.5 days	7.5 days

Aspect 13: Securing community confidence

Public confidence in effectiveness of criminal justice agencies in bringing offenders to justice (British Crime Survey)

CJS area baseline 2002-03	2004-05 (last OPA)	Performance in 2006-07
35.0%	43.0%	40.6%

B CRIMINAL JUSTICE AGENCIES AND ORGANISATIONS WHO ASSISTED WITH THIS OVERALL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

Police

Staffordshire Police

HM Courts Service

Stafford Combined Court

Stoke-on-Trent Combined Court

Victim Support

Victim Support Staffordshire

Community Groups

Partners against Crimes of Hate-East Staffordshire REC

North Staffordshire Racial Equality Council – PARINS

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