

**THE INSPECTORATE'S REPORT
ON
CPS CHESHIRE**

REPORT 2/03

MARCH 2003

CPS CHESHIRE



AREA OFFICE

Chester

OTHER OFFICES

Crewe

Warrington

MAGISTRATES' COURTS

Chester

Crewe

Halton (Runcorn & Widnes)

Macclesfield

Northwich

Warrington

CROWN COURTS

Chester

Knutsford

Warrington

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PREFACE

Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate was established by the Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate Act 2000 as an independent statutory body. The Chief Inspector is appointed by, and reports to, the Attorney General.

HMCPsi's purpose is to promote continuous improvement in the efficiency, effectiveness and fairness of the prosecution services within a joined-up criminal justice system through a process of inspection and evaluation; the provision of advice; and the identification of good practice. It works in partnership with other criminal justice inspectorates and agencies, including the Crown Prosecution Service itself, but without compromising its robust independence.

The main focus of the HMCPsi work programme is the inspection of business units within the CPS – the 42 Areas and the Headquarters' Directorates. In 2002 it completed its first cycle of inspections during which it visited and published reports on each of the 42 CPS Areas as well as the Casework Directorate and Policy Directorate within CPS Headquarters. A limited amount of re-inspection was also undertaken. This report comes at the very beginning of the second cycle of inspections. Some significant changes have been made in its methodology in order to enhance the efficiency of HMCPsi itself and adapt its processes to developments within both the CPS itself and the criminal justice system more widely. The four main changes are the adoption of a four year cycle with each Area now receiving two visits during that period, one of which may be an intermediate (as opposed to full) inspection; a risk assessment technique has been developed to determine the appropriate type of inspection and the issues which should be covered; an inspection framework has been developed founded on the EFQM (Business Excellence Model); and the incorporation of requirements to ensure that HMCPsi's inspection process covers all matters contained in the inspection template promulgated by the Commission for Racial Equality. We will also be using a wider range of techniques for gathering evidence.

The Government has initiated a range of measures to develop cohesion and better co-ordinated working arrangements amongst the criminal justice agencies so that the system overall can operate in a more holistic manner. Public Service Agreements between HM Treasury and the relevant Departments set out the expectations which the Government has of the criminal justice system at national level. The framework within which the system is managed nationally has been substantially revised and that is reflected by the establishment in each of the 42 criminal justice areas of a Local Criminal Justice Board. During the second cycle of inspections, HMCPsi will place even greater emphasis on the effectiveness of CPS relationships with other criminal justice agencies and its contribution to the work of these new Boards. For this purpose, HMCPsi will also work closely with other criminal justice inspectorates.

Although the inspection process will continue to focus heavily on the quality of casework decision-making and casework handling, it will continue to extend to overall CPS performance. Consistently good casework is invariably underpinned by sound systems, good management and structured monitoring of performance. Although reports in our first cycle tended to address management and operational issues separately from casework, that fundamental linkage will now be reflected more fully through the EFQM based inspection framework. Inspection teams comprise legal inspectors, business management inspectors and casework inspectors working closely together. HMCPsi also invites suitably informed

members of the public nominated by national organisations to join the process as lay inspectors. These inspectors are unpaid volunteers who examine the way in which the CPS relates to the public, through its dealings with witnesses and victims, its external communication and liaison, its handling of complaints and the application of the public interest test contained in the Code for Crown Prosecutors.

HMCPSI has offices in London and York. The London office has two Groups which undertake inspections in the Midlands and Wales, and in Southern England. The Group based in York undertakes inspections in Northern England. Both offices undertake thematic reviews and joint inspections with other criminal justice inspectorates. At any given time HMCPSI is likely to be conducting six geographically-based or directorate inspections and two thematic reviews, as well as joint inspections.

The inspectorates' reports identify strengths and areas for improvement, draw attention to good practice and make recommendations in respect of those aspects of the performance which most need to be improved. During the second cycle of inspections, a database will be built up enabling comparisons to be drawn between performances of CPS Areas. The table of key performance indicators within this report makes provision for such comparison even though that has not yet occurred; this will only be done after the first six inspections when the data available will be sufficient for comparative purposes. HMCPSI points out the care which must be undertaken if readers are minded to compare performance described in this report with the overall CPS performance in the first cycle. Although many of the key requirements remain and are tested by the same standard, the composition of the file sample has altered and this may make such comparisons unreliable. For that reason, no such comparisons are made in this report.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 CPS Cheshire serves the area covered by the Cheshire Constabulary. It has three offices, at Chester, Warrington and Crewe. The Area Headquarters (Secretariat) is based at the Chester office. In December 2002 the Area employed the equivalent of 107 full-time staff, which is projected to rise to 111.7 by March 2003, predominantly by additional administrative staff.
- 1.2 Area business is divided on functional lines between magistrates' courts and Crown Court work. The Magistrates' Court Unit (MCU) is responsible for the conduct of all cases dealt with in the magistrates' courts, and has bases at Chester, Crewe and Warrington. The MCU at Crewe Police Station is a co-located unit where CPS staff work closely with police administrative staff. The Crown Court Unit (CCU) reviews and handles cases dealt with in the Crown Court, and has bases at Chester and Warrington.
- 1.3 The Area Secretariat comprises the Chief Crown Prosecutor (CCP), the Area Business Manager (ABM) and the full time equivalent of 5.8 other staff, two of whom are based in the Victim Information Bureau.
- 1.4 The Area Management Team (AMT) consists of the CCP, the ABM, Unit Heads and unit Business Managers (BMs). It meets monthly to consider Area business.
- 1.5 The CCU and MCU are each headed by a Unit Head, reporting to the CCP. The Unit Heads are supported at a local level by Assistant Unit Heads in the CCU and District Crown Prosecutors (DCPs) in the MCUs, and by unit Business Managers. Details of staffing and the courts covered by the MCU and CCU are set out below:

Staff Grade	Magistrates' Court Unit			Crown Court Unit	
	Chester	Crewe	Warrington	Chester	Warrington
	Magistrates' courts at: Chester Northwich	Magistrates' courts at: Crewe Macclesfield	Magistrates' courts at: Warrington Runcorn Widnes	Crown Court at: Chester Knutsford	Crown Court at: Warrington Knutsford
Level E			1	1	
Level D	1	1	1	1	1
Level C	8	8	8.8	6.6	2.8
Level B2 caseworkers	1.4	1	3	2	
Level B1 caseworkers	0.6	1	1	8.7	6.3
Level A caseworkers	11.2	0.8	12.7	5	3
TOTAL	22.2	11.8	27.5	24.3	13.1

A detailed breakdown of staffing and structure can be found at Annex 2

1.6 Details of the Area's caseload in the year to September 2002 are set out below:

Category	Number	Area % of total caseload	National % of total caseload
Pre-charge advice	586	2.7%	3.8%
Summary motoring	7,773	36.2%	36.8%
Summary non-motoring	3,733	17.4%	18.8%
Magistrates' guilty pleas	13,684	84.8%	82.3%
Either way and indictable	9,172	42.7%	40%
Committals	1,373	6.6%	6.8%
Crown Court guilty pleas	1,107	78.9%	73.8%

1.7 A more detailed table of caseload and case outcomes compared with the national average is attached at Annex 3, and a table giving caseload in relation to Area resources at Annex 4. Without wishing to detract from improvements made since our last report, Cheshire (in common with other CPS Areas) benefited from a significant increase in its budget in order to drive up performance. As a result, the Area has been able to recruit more staff and reduce the average numbers of cases dealt with per lawyer and caseworker.

Methodology

1.8 The inspection process is based on the inspection framework summarised at Annex 1. There are two types of inspection. A full inspection considers each aspect of Area performance within the framework: full and intermediate. An intermediate inspection considers only those aspects which an assessment against the key elements of the inspection framework, and in particular the key performance results, indicates require attention. These key results are drawn from the Area's own performance data, and other performance data gathered within the local criminal justice area.

1.9 The scope of the inspection is also influenced by the length of time since a particular aspect of performance was previously inspected. The assessment in respect of Cheshire also drew on findings from the previous inspection of the Area, which took place between October and November 2000, with a report being published in February 2001. That report made a total of 13 recommendations and six suggestions, and identified six aspects of good practice.

1.10 As a result of this assessment, it was determined that the inspection of CPS Cheshire should be an intermediate one. Aspects of performance of concern from the last inspection included: the disclosure of unused material; the effectiveness of pre-trial reviews (PTRs) in the magistrates' court and their bearing on cracked and ineffective trials; persistent young offender (PYO) performance; the timeliness of service of committal papers to the defence; and the operation of the Area custody time limit systems. The inspection team paid particular attention to the extent to which Area performance had made progress in relation to these aspects of casework. The inspection also considered how the Area was managed.

- 1.11 The inspection did not include consideration of advice to the police, discontinuance of proceedings, casework decisions in respect of bail and mode of trial, and adverse cases in the magistrates' courts and Crown Court.
- 1.12 Our methodology combined examination of 138 cases finalised between July and September 2002, and interviews with members of CPS staff at all levels, criminal law practitioners and local representatives of criminal justice agencies. Our file sample comprised magistrates' courts and Crown Court trials (whether acquittals or convictions), cracked and ineffective trials and cases involving race crime. The magistrates' courts sample also included cases involving domestic violence and youth trials. We also examined 15 files for the accuracy of custody time limit recording whilst on site. A detailed breakdown of our file sample is shown at Annex 5. A list of individuals from whom we received comments is at Annex 6. The team carried out observations of the performance of advocates and the delivery of service at court in both the magistrates' courts and the Crown Court.
- 1.13 Inspectors visited the Area between 2 and 6 December 2002. The lay inspector for this inspection was Mary Bedells, who is a Witness Service volunteer and was nominated by Victim Support. The role of the lay inspector is described in the preface. She reviewed files that had been the subject of complaints from members of the public and also considered letters written by CPS staff to victims following the reduction or discontinuance of a charge. She also visited some courts and had the opportunity to speak to some of the witnesses after they had given evidence. This was a valuable contribution to the inspection process. The views and findings of the lay inspector have been included within the report as a whole, rather than separately reported. She gave her time on a purely voluntary basis, and the Chief Inspector is grateful for her effort and assistance.
- 1.14 The purpose and aims of the Inspectorate are set out in Annex 7. A glossary of the terms used in this report is contained in Annex 8.

2. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The quality of initial and continuing review is very good and has improved since our last inspection. We agreed with the review decisions in every case examined in our file sample. Cases usually proceed on the right charges in compliance with appropriate charging standards and CPS policy in relation to sensitive cases.
- 2.2 Case preparation is generally prompt, although timely service of committal papers needs to be improved and work needs to be done to improve the effectiveness of PTRs in the magistrates' courts. Area custody time limit systems have improved considerably since the last inspection but need further attention.
- 2.3 The Area is alive to the needs of other criminal justice agencies and has worked closely with CJS partners in relation to PYOs, leading to performance better than the Government's target. Other examples of close working include the development of a listing protocol, a witness staggering scheme, co-location at Crewe MCU and work to improve performance in relation to disclosure. The Area has been particularly influential in promoting CJS area race initiatives and is developing its links within the community.
- 2.4 In common with other CJS areas, Cheshire is required to tackle the rate of attrition (the justice gap). Cheshire has a target for 2003-04 of bringing 761 additional offences to justice and 560 adult persistent offenders have been identified. At the time of our inspection, the Area was working closely with other agencies in Cheshire to prepare a plan, by January 2003, for dealing with the justice gap. The Area has also established a narrowing the justice gap working group.
- 2.5 The Area already has a number of systems in place which have an impact on attrition. Adverse and unsuccessful cases are monitored, and action is taken to address poor performance. Specialists review cases in accordance with CPS policy. Steps are taken to ascertain the reasons why witnesses retract or do not attend court, to ensure intimidation has not taken place. Cracked and ineffective trials remain a problem in the Area, however. The listing protocol has been of limited effect in reducing the overall rate, which stood at 67% in the magistrates' courts for the quarter ending 30 September 2002.
- 2.6 The standard of CPS advocates is good and in-house advocates are regularly monitored. There is, however, a need to develop a structured programme for the monitoring of agents and counsel, particularly in view of the weak performance of some counsel we observed in the Crown Court.
- 2.7 Lawyers and caseworkers are aware of their responsibilities towards victims and witnesses at court. The Direct Communication with Victims scheme is operating well but there is some scope to improve timeliness and lawyer engagement.
- 2.8 The Area is well led and well managed. Area managers are open, approachable and have a clear vision of what they hope to achieve. Effective management and organisational structures encourage the continuous monitoring and awareness of performance, and enable the AMT to work towards the delivery of its aims and objectives. A more structured approach to business planning would assist the Area in delivering its current objectives and achieving future public service agreement (PSA) targets. Area performance management systems enable managers to take informed decisions on future policy and strategy.

- 2.9 The co-located MCU at Crewe has proved a success, with managers noting significant increases in performance in relation to Crewe cases, in contrast to Macclesfield cases, which the Crewe office also serves. Staff morale at Crewe is high in spite of accommodation difficulties. Progress towards co-location elsewhere in the county has proved more problematic due to accommodation difficulties but a project team has been appointed to progress co-location in Chester.
- 2.10 Financial management arrangements are sound and the Area has adopted a prudent approach to recruitment and salary management.
- 2.11 We make recommendations aimed at improving Area performance:
1. that:
 - * the Area monitor the reasons behind cracked and ineffective trials and take appropriate action;
 - * Area lawyers be more proactive in reviewing cases for PTR; and
 - * Area systems for recording PTR instructions be improved to encourage a greater analysis of case issues (paragraph 4.8).
 2. that the Area tighten its procedures on disclosure of unused material to ensure that secondary disclosure is dealt with in a consistent manner, in accordance with the legislation and Attorney General's Guidelines, and that files contain a comprehensive record of the procedure (paragraph 4.19).
 3. that the Area introduce a formal system of monitoring and reporting upon performance of agents in the magistrates' court, and counsel in the Crown Court (paragraph 5.10).
 4. that the Area:
 - * institute mechanisms for improved planning and co-ordination of staff movements; and
 - * increase the involvement of line managers in decisions in appropriate circumstances

in order that the impacts of staff movements on local operational efficiency are considered in advance and addressed (paragraph 8.6).
 5. that the AMT appoint a project leader of sufficient seniority able to commit the Area to action in order to drive forward the co-location project at Chester (paragraph 11.15).
 6. that:
 - * unit and operational issues are fully reflected in future Area Business Plans;
 - * actions are clearly identified, responsibilities assigned and time scales for action set;
 - * risk is integrated; and
 - * the Area involve staff in the business planning process (paragraph 11.20).

3. KEY PERFORMANCE RESULTS

3.1 The PSA, reviewed in 2002, sets objectives and targets for the whole of the CJS. There are three objectives. Objective II is relevant to the CPS. It requires the CJS to ensure the effective delivery of justice and sets two targets.

3.2 In this section we deal firstly with the Area's key performance results that relate to those two targets. We shall then deal with key performance results relating to Area objectives and targets that do not fall within the revised PSA.

Target 1: To improve the delivery of justice by increasing the number of crimes for which an offender is brought to justice to 1.2 million by 2005-06; with an improvement in all CJS areas, a greater increase in the worst performing areas and a reduction in the proportion of ineffective trials.

CPS PERFORMANCE	National Target 2002-2003	National Performance Apr-Sep 2002	Area Target 2002-2003	Area Performance Apr-Sep 2002
MAGISTRATES' AND YOUTH COURT CASEWORK				
First Review				
Decisions to proceed at first review complying with evidential test in the Code for Crown Prosecutors ¹	-	*	-	100%
Decisions to proceed at first review complying with public interest test in the Code for Crown Prosecutors ¹	-	*	-	100%
Requests for additional evidence/information made appropriately at first review ¹	-	*	-	82.6%
Discontinuance				
Discontinuance rate of completed cases (CPS figure)	-	-	-	-
Discontinued cases with timely discontinuances ¹	-	*	-	-
Decisions to discontinue complying with the evidential test in the Code for Crown Prosecutors ¹	-	*	-	-
Decisions to discontinue complying with the public interest test in the Code for Crown Prosecutors ¹	-	*	-	-
Discontinued cases where all reasonable steps had been taken to request additional evidence/information ¹	-	*	-	-
Level of charge				
Charges that required amendment and were amended in a timely manner ¹	-	*	-	76%
Cases that proceeded to trial or guilty plea on the correct level of charge ¹	-	*	-	96.4%
Cracked and ineffective summary trials				
Ineffective trials as recorded by CPS and magistrates' courts JPM	-	(July to Sept) 30.9%	-	(July to Sept) 25.2%
Cracked trials as recorded by CPS and magistrates' courts JPM	-	(July to Sept) 37.5%	-	(July to Sept) 41.7%
Cracked trials that could have been avoided by CPS action ¹	-	*	-	7.1% (1 out of 14 cases)

CPS PERFORMANCE	National Target 2002-2003	National Performance Apr-Sep 2002	Area Target 2002-2003	Area Performance Apr-Sep 2002
MAGISTRATES' AND YOUTH COURT CASEWORK				
Summary trial				
Acquittal rate in magistrates court (% of finalisations) – CPS figure	-	1.7%	-	1.7%
Decisions to proceed to trial complying with the evidential test in the Code for Crown Prosecutors ¹	-	*	-	100%
Decisions to proceed to summary trial complying with the public interest test in the Code for Crown Prosecutors ¹	-	*	-	100%
Cases with timely summary trial review ¹	-	*	-	91.7%
Requests for additional evidence/information made appropriately at summary trial review ¹	-	*	-	72.7% (8 out of 11 cases)
Area self-assessment of no cases dismissed on a submission of no case to answer attributable to CPS failure (% of finalisations) [% of cases dismissed no case to answer]	Intermediate inspection – not inspected	Intermediate inspection – not inspected	Intermediate inspection – not inspected	Intermediate inspection – not inspected
No case to answers where outcome was foreseeable, and CPS could have done more to avoid outcome ¹	Intermediate inspection – not inspected	Intermediate inspection – not inspected	Intermediate inspection – not inspected	Intermediate inspection – not inspected
CROWN COURT CASEWORK				
Committal and service of prosecution papers				
Cases with timely committal review (including review of “sent” cases prior to service of prosecution case) ¹	-	*	-	68.2%
Decisions to proceed at committal/service of prosecution papers stage complying with evidential test in the Code for Crown Prosecutors ¹	-	*	-	100%
Decisions to proceed at committal/service of prosecution papers stage complying with public interest test in the Code for Crown Prosecutors ¹	-	*	-	100%
Requests for additional evidence/information made appropriately at committal review ¹	-	*	-	100%
Timely and correct continuing review after committal ¹	-	*	-	90% (9 out of 10 cases)
Cases with timely service of committal papers on defence ¹	80%	* 86.6% ³	88%	77.3% ¹ 79.6% ²
Cases with timely delivery of instructions to counsel	84%	* 86.5% ³	94%	78.6% ¹ (17 out of 22 cases) 96.7% ²
Instructions to counsel that were satisfactory ¹	-	*	-	86.4%
Cracked and ineffective trials				
Cracked trials that could have been avoided by CPS action ¹	-	*	-	20% (4 out of 20 cases)
Ineffective trials where action by CPS could have avoided an adjournment ¹	-	*	-	Not sampled

CPS PERFORMANCE	National Target 2002-2003	National Performance Apr-Sep 2002	Area Target 2002-2003	Area Performance Apr-Sep 2002
Level of charge				
Charges that required amendment and were amended in a timely manner ¹	-	*	-	100%
Indictments that required amendment ¹	-	*	-	31.8%
Cases that proceeded to trial or guilty plea on the correct level of charge ¹	-	*	-	100%
Judge ordered and judge directed acquittals				
Area self-assessment of JOA/JDAs attributable to CPS failure (% of finalisations) [% of JOA and JDAs]	Intermediate inspection – not inspected	Intermediate inspection – not inspected	Intermediate inspection – not inspected	Intermediate inspection – not inspected
JOA/JDAs where outcome was foreseeable, and CPS could have done more to avoid outcome ¹	Intermediate inspection – not inspected	Intermediate inspection – not inspected	Intermediate inspection – not inspected	Intermediate inspection – not inspected
Trials				
Acquittal rate in Crown Court (% of all finalisations excluding JOA, appeals/committals for sentence and warrant write-offs) ²	-	9.9%	-	6.7%

¹ as assessed by HMCPSI from examination of the file sample during inspection

² self-assessment by Area

³ nationally collated figure based on Area self-assessment returns

* average performance of Areas inspected in inspection cycle 2002-2004 based on a sample of cases examined and observations at court [no figures available until six inspections completed]

Commentary

- 3.3 The standard of decision-making in the MCU is high. It is generally reflected in the quality of review, although some gaps in evidence or information about the case are not dealt with as quickly as they might be, or at all in some instances. The majority of cases are dealt with on charges which reflect the degree of offending. Inappropriate charges are amended, although almost a quarter of charges requiring amendment were not amended at the earliest opportunity.
- 3.4 The standard of initial review endorsements has improved since the last inspection with evidential factors being recorded in 48 and public interest factors in 51 out of 54 cases examined.
- 3.5 Timeliness of summary trial review is good. The Area's ineffective trial rate is lower than the national average but their cracked trial rate higher. We make a recommendation aimed at improving Area performance at paragraph 4.8.
- 3.6 The standard of review in the CCU is very high. The concentration on improving the quality of Crown Court casework has been successful in ensuring cases are dealt with on the correct level of charge. Area acquittal rates in the Crown Court are lower than the national average. Unsuccessful outcomes in the Crown Court stand at 15%, having reduced by almost 10% in the year to September 2002. It is Area policy to avoid the use of bind overs unless absolutely necessary.

3.7 Timeliness of review and preparation of Crown Court casework requires attention. Over 30% of committals were reviewed late. Some of this is due to the late submission of files, which the Area is working with the police to improve. However, it affects its ability to serve the defence with committal papers in time and Area performance in this respect is below target.

3.8 The standard of briefs to counsel has improved, as has Area performance in relation to the delivery of briefs to counsel, although our assessment of timeliness was at variance with the Area's own measurement. Although almost one third of indictments required amendment, the majority were minor and did not give rise to any serious concerns. Swift attention to this will amply repay the effort through the benefit to the image and standing of the CPS amongst practitioners.

Target 2: To improve the level of public confidence in the CJS, including increasing that of ethnic minority communities, and increasing year on year, the satisfaction of victims and witnesses, whilst respecting the rights of defendants.

CPS PERFORMANCE	National Target 2002-2003	National Performance Apr-Sep 2002	Area Target 2002-2003	Area Performance Apr-Sep 2002
MAGISTRATES' AND YOUTH COURT CASEWORK				
Disclosure				
Cases where primary disclosure correctly handled ¹		*		79.2%
Cases where secondary disclosure correctly handled ¹		*		No defence statements in file sample
Witness care				
Trials where appropriate use made of S9 CJA 1967 ¹		*		100%
Trials where appropriate use made of the witness care measures ¹		*		33.3% (1 out of 3 cases)
CROWN COURT CASEWORK				
Disclosure				
Cases where primary disclosure correctly handled ¹		*		100%
Cases where secondary disclosure correctly handled ¹		*		54.5%
Witness care				
Trials where appropriate use made of witness phasing/standby ¹		*		55.5% (5 out of 9 cases)
Trials where appropriate use is made of witness care measures ¹		*		100% (4 cases)
COMBINED MAGISTRATES' COURTS AND CROWN COURT				
Custody time limits				
Cases in sample where expiry dates accurately calculated	-	*	-	100%

CPS PERFORMANCE	National Target 2002-2003	National Performance Apr-Sep 2002	Area Target 2002-2003	Area Performance Apr-Sep 2002
OTHER ISSUES				
Payment of witness expenses				
Payment of witness expenses within 10 days of receipt of claim ²	100%	99.7%	100%	99.8%
Handling of complaints				
Complaints replied to within 10 days ²	91.3%	90%	96%	100%
Citizens charter commitment				
MPs correspondence replied to within 15 days ²	100%	98%	100%	100%
Improving productivity				
Reduce sick absence rate per member of staff ²	National target 2001	National performance 2001	Area target 2001	Area performance 2001
	8.5 days	10.6 days	9.1 days	16.5 days
	National target to be achieved by Dec 2003	National performance 2002	Area target as national target to be achieved by Dec 2003	Area performance 2002
	7 days	Not yet available	7 days	11.1 days
OTHER ASPECTS OF CPS PERFORMANCE				
CJS Youth Justice Performance Measures (shared between Home Office, Lord Chancellor's Department and CPS)				
To halve time from arrest to sentence for persistent young offenders from 142 to 71 days by 31 March 2002	71 days	68 days	71 days	61.5 days

¹ as assessed by HMCPSI from examination of the file sample during inspection

² self-assessment by CPS

* average performance of Areas inspected in inspection cycle 2002-2004 based on a sample of cases examined and observations at court [no figures available until six inspections completed]

Commentary

- 3.9 Although disclosure is less of an issue in the magistrates' courts, MCU performance in respect of primary disclosure needs attention. Secondary disclosure is relatively rare in summary cases and as a result our file sample did not contain sufficient numbers upon which to base an informed judgement.
- 3.10 Primary disclosure is handled well in the CCU but secondary disclosure reveals an unacceptable level of performance.
- 3.11 Witness care measures are being used, though our sample revealed too few cases to draw any significant conclusions about Area performance. Although our sample shows that witness phasing and stand-by arrangements were not used in just under a half of appropriate Crown Court cases, again our sample was insufficient to indicate how effective the recently introduced joint protocol is working.

- 3.12 The Area has considerably improved its performance in dealing with PYOs since the last inspection. A recommendation was made in the last inspection report that the Area should engage with other agencies to ensure that the time taken to deal with PYOs be reduced within the Government target. The Area response included participation in a multi-agency protocol for handling PYO cases and a detailed analysis of reasons for delay. The Area's efforts, in conjunction with the other agencies, have resulted in an overall reduction in the period for dealing with PYOs, which is better than the Government target.
- 3.13 Timeliness of response to complaints and MPs' letters is impressive. Area sickness levels are reducing as a result of active management of long-term sickness.

4. CASEWORK

KEY REQUIREMENT: THE AREA DESIGNS, MANAGES AND IMPROVES ITS CASEWORK PROCESSES IN ORDER TO DELIVER KEY PERFORMANCE, CUSTOMER AND SOCIETY RESULTS, TO ENSURE THAT ALL PROCESSES ARE FREE FROM BIAS AND DISCRIMINATION, AND TO SUPPORT POLICY AND STRATEGY.

Overview

- 4.1 Both the quality and timeliness of Area casework has improved since the last inspection in a number of key areas. Case preparation is generally prompt, although an improvement is needed in the preparation and service of committal papers. Sensitive cases are dealt with appropriately but greater use could be made of specialists.
- 4.2 Although a recent magistrates' courts listing protocol has reduced over-listing, cracked and ineffective trials remain a problem for the CJS area. Further work is needed to improve the Area's contribution to the effectiveness of PTRs and analyse the reasons behind cracked and ineffective trials.
- 4.3 Area performance in respect of disclosure of unused material has improved as a result of joint initiatives with the police, although there is still room for improvement and a more consistent approach needs to be applied to handling secondary disclosure. Considerable work has been done to address deficiencies in the Area's custody time limit systems but again there is room for further improvement.
- 4.4 The standard of briefs has improved considerably, with the majority containing a detailed analysis of the evidence and issues.

Summary trial preparation

STANDARD: AREA SUMMARY TRIAL PROCESSES ENSURE THAT THE PTR AND THE TRIAL DATE ARE EFFECTIVE HEARINGS, AND ANY DECISIONS ON ACCEPTABILITY OF PLEAS OR ALTERNATIVE CHARGES ARE MADE IN ACCORDANCE WITH CODE TESTS AND CPS POLICY.

- 4.5 The last inspection report highlighted ineffective PTRs and double- and triple-listing of trials and made a recommendation aimed at reducing the cracked and ineffective trial rate.
- 4.6 Although much has been done by all agencies, PTRs are still not as effective as they could be. A recent listing protocol between the Area and the Magistrates' Court Service (MCS) has reduced over-listing, but has had little effect in reducing cracked and ineffective trials.
- 4.7 The MCU Head and DCPs gather information on the operation of the listing protocol when they conduct courts or monitor advocates. Although this information is shared with the Chief Clerk and local managers, there is scope for a more structured approach to monitoring the effectiveness of PTRs by looking at the reasons why trials crack, or are ineffective, and whether the prosecution could have done more to avoid this happening. Specific monitoring of cracked and ineffective trials in PYO cases might also assist the Area to learn lessons in preparation for the persistent offender initiative.

- 4.8 Whilst the majority of cases are reviewed for PTR in good time, the Area acknowledges that lawyers do not always give sufficient attention to issues such as alternative charges or acceptable pleas. The PTR review sheet should be amended to place a greater emphasis on case issues, such as acceptable pleas, and give appropriate instructions to advocates. Experienced Crewe MCU lawyers deal with PTRs and this should be the case across the Area.

Strengths

- * Joint working with MCS to agree a listing protocol.
- * Sharing of performance data, albeit collected in an ad hoc fashion.
- * Deployment of experienced MCU lawyers at Crewe to prosecute PTRs.

Aspects for improvement

- * Cracked and ineffective trials should be included in the Area's performance management programme and data shared with CJS partners.
- * Systems for reviewing cases for PTR.

RECOMMENDATION

- * **The Area monitor the reasons behind cracked and ineffective trials and take appropriate action;**
- * **Area lawyers be more proactive in reviewing cases for PTR; and**
- * **Area systems for recording PTR instructions be improved to encourage a greater analysis of case issues.**

Committal and Crown Court case preparation

STANDARD: AREA PROCESSES FOR CASES "SENT" OR COMMITTED FOR TRIAL TO THE CROWN COURT ENSURE THAT:

- * **SERVICE OF THE PROSECUTION CASE ON THE DEFENCE TAKES PLACE WITHIN AGREED TIME PERIODS BEFORE COMMITTAL/PLEA AND DIRECTIONS HEARING (PDH);**
- * **PROSECUTION HAS TAKEN ALL NECESSARY STEPS TO MAKE THE PDH AND TRIAL DATE EFFECTIVE;**
- * **THE ADVOCATE IN THE CROWN COURT IS FULLY INSTRUCTED.**

- 4.9 Area performance for the service of committal papers on the defence in the first half of 2002-03 was below the Area's target, and the national average for the same period.
- 4.10 Different approaches are adopted towards the preparation of committals in the CCUs at Chester and Warrington. At Warrington, a lawyer and a B1 caseworker are assigned to the case pre-committal and are able to discuss the case if required, as part of the review. However, at Chester, save for more complex and sensitive cases, caseworkers are not assigned until after committal. The Area should consider whether the preparation of straightforward committals by Chester CCU lawyers is the best use of their time.
- 4.11 Committal Review and Case Progress Sheets are completed by lawyers and include instructions on committal preparation and an analysis of the issues in the case to be incorporated into the brief. The depth of review was very good.
- 4.12 The standard of instructions to counsel has greatly improved since the last inspection. The instructions contained sufficient case summaries, as well as detailed and careful analyses of the issues, in 19 out of 22 examined (86.4%). The concentration of lawyers specialising in Crown Court casework, and the greater collaboration between lawyer and caseworker, has contributed to more informed case management and improved preparation.
- 4.13 The majority of cases are trial ready by the time a PDH is held. The CPS has a good record of prompt compliance with directions, which relate largely to disclosure. Both Crown Court centres have case progression officers who liaise with the prosecution and defence to ensure that orders are complied with on time.

Strengths

- * The depth and detail of review in Crown Court cases.
- * The quality of instructions to counsel.

Aspects for improvement

- * The timeliness of preparation and service of committal papers on the defence and the court.

Disclosure of unused material

STANDARD: AREA PROCESSES FOR DISCLOSURE ENSURE FULL AND TIMELY COMPLIANCE WITH CPIA AND CPS POLICY/OPERATIONAL INSTRUCTIONS IN BOTH MAGISTRATES' AND CROWN COURT.

- 4.14 The last inspection report highlighted weaknesses in relation to disclosure and recommended that the Area review its procedures, in co-operation with the police, to take account of the (then recently issued) Attorney General's Guidelines on Disclosure. Whilst this led to a number of initiatives, which have resulted in improved performance, the Area acknowledges that further improvement can still be made.

- 4.15 Police descriptions of material on disclosure schedules has improved and the Area is now provided, as a matter of routine, with material frequently requested by the defence. This process had started at the time of the last inspection but was inconsistent in its application.
- 4.16 Our file sample showed better performance in relation to primary disclosure, particularly in the CCU, than in relation to secondary disclosure. Secondary disclosure is rare in magistrates' court cases because the defence are not required to serve a defence statement.
- 4.17 Secondary disclosure had not been properly handled in almost half of the CCU cases we looked at, and there were inconsistencies in the way the Area's generous approach towards disclosure was applied. In some cases, however, secondary disclosure had not been completed at all. The use of the Area disclosure folder to record decisions and file documents also varied.
- 4.18 The Area's disclosure champion has developed a disclosure training pack and delivered training to Area staff and police officers. Further training will be delivered on the recently introduced joint police/CPS operational instructions on disclosure.
- 4.19 Unit Heads monitor disclosure performance through regular dip sampling. Disclosure is also monitored through the Area's court attendance programme. Issues relating to casework preparation and presentation are highlighted and fed into the quarterly reviews of unit performance prepared by Unit Heads. Performance is also discussed in unit meetings.

Aspects for improvement

- * A more consistent approach to secondary disclosure.
- * Consistent use of the Area disclosure folder.
- * Action dating to ensure secondary disclosure is completed should be introduced across the Area.

RECOMMENDATION

The Area tighten its procedures on disclosure of unused material to ensure that secondary disclosure is dealt with in a consistent manner, in accordance with the legislation and Attorney General's Guidelines, and that files contain a comprehensive record of the procedure.

Sensitive cases

STANDARD: SENSITIVE CASES (DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, CHILD ABUSE/CHILD WITNESS, RAPE, HOMOPHOBIC ATTACKS) ARE DEALT WITH IN A TIMELY WAY IN ACCORDANCE WITH CPS POLICY IN A MANNER FROM BIAS AND DISCRIMINATION; AND RACE CRIME IS DEALT WITH IN A MANNER THAT IS FREE FROM BIAS AND DISCRIMINATION.

- 4.20 The Area handles domestic violence cases sensitively and in accordance with CPS policy on domestic violence. We examined 20 cases, all of which were dealt with in accordance with CPS policy. Trained specialists reviewed 13 cases.
- 4.21 Where a victim indicates a desire to retract the allegation, the circumstances are fully investigated before a decision is taken whether to continue with the case. The police interview victims who do not attend trials to ensure that no undue pressure has been brought to bear.
- 4.22 Although Cheshire does not have a high minority ethnic population, the Area is called upon to deal with race crime cases and has a number of trained specialists. The Area has also appointed a race champion to co-ordinate training and the CCP considers all cases where a decision has been taken not to proceed on public interest grounds.
- 4.23 We examined 18 race crime cases and agreed with the review decisions in all but one case, where a plea was accepted to a lesser offence in circumstances which did not accord with national policy. Specialists reviewed 11 cases.
- 4.24 Racist incident data is monitored on a quarterly basis for trends and data shared with CJS partners and the Cheshire Race Equality Council.
- 4.25 Sexual offences involve special, and often difficult, evidential considerations, which were highlighted in the Report into the Investigation and Prosecution of Cases Involving Allegations of Rape (April 2002), written jointly by HMCPSI and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC). The Area has implemented new procedures following the report. An Area rape champion has been appointed and instructions to counsel in rape cases now contain specific paragraphs relating to the conduct of the case intended to promote the interests of the victim.

Aspects for improvement

- * Greater use of specialist prosecutors to review sensitive cases.

Custody time limits

STANDARD: SYSTEMS ARE IN PLACE TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH TIME LIMITS/TARGETS.

- 4.26 The last inspection report was critical of performance in relation to monitoring custody time limits (CTLs) and recommended a review of Area systems, and training for staff. As a result, the Area introduced new monitoring procedures including a quarterly audit.

- 4.27 The expiry dates in the 15 files we examined were correct, although the standard of file endorsements was of concern. The Area's CTL system provides that review dates are recorded both on computer and in a diary. However, we saw cases that had been recorded on the computer only, without any back-up arrangements.
- 4.28 Recent Area audit reports to the AMT have noted misunderstandings in relation to CTLs in either way cases dealt with summarily, and our file examination provided evidence in support. Particular attention should be paid to staff training in this area.
- 4.29 Area desktop instructions were prepared before the introduction of the procedures relating to 'sent' cases and need updating.

Strengths

- * Monitoring of CTL cases through regular audits.

Aspects for improvement

- * Inconsistent use of Area back-up systems.
- * Further training is needed on CTLs in either way cases.
- * CTL desk instructions need updating to take account of time limits in 'sent' cases.

National Probation Service and Youth Offending Teams

STANDARD: AREA HAS SYSTEMS TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH THE DUTY OF DISCLOSURE TO THE NATIONAL PROBATION SERVICE AND THE YOUTH OFFENDING TEAM.

- 4.30 Pre-sentence disclosure packages were provided to the National Probation Service in 31 out of 54 relevant cases examined, and were timely in 24 cases. We were unable to ascertain whether a disclosure package had been sent in 21 cases. A service level agreement regulating the provision of pre-sentence disclosure packages is about to be reviewed.

Aspects for improvement

- * The timeliness of provision of pre-sentence disclosure packages needs improving.

Court endorsements

STANDARD: COURT ENDORSEMENTS ARE ACCURATE AND THOROUGH AND TIMELY ACTIONS ARE TAKEN AS A RESULT.

- 4.31 The last inspection report recommended an improvement in court endorsements and attempts to improve the standard have been largely successful. Court endorsements in 71 out of 78 files we examined for that purpose were clear and comprehensive, although basic errors still occur and the recording of custody status needs improving.
- 4.32 Crown Court file endorsements tended to be less detailed than they needed to be, particularly when indictments had been amended.

Aspects for improvement

- * Accuracy of court endorsements need improving.
- * Crown Court endorsements need to be more detailed.

Learning points

STANDARD: THE AREA HAS EFFECTIVE SYSTEMS IN PLACE TO IDENTIFY LEARNING POINTS FROM CASEWORK AND IMPLEMENT IMPROVEMENTS. INFORMATION ON OPERATIONAL AND LEGAL ISSUES IS EFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY DISSEMINATED.

- 4.33 The CCU Head conducts a thorough and careful analysis of Crown Court acquittals and adverse cases every month, and completes a casework digest for distribution to lawyers and caseworkers. Issues of particular significance are discussed in unit meetings. There is scope for a similar system to be adopted in the MCU.
- 4.34 Case failures stemming from poor review are discussed with the lawyer concerned and future performance monitored, as necessary.

Strengths

- * Monthly reports on acquittals and adverse cases in the CCU are provided to staff.

5. **ADVOCACY AND QUALITY OF SERVICE DELIVERY AT COURT**

KEY REQUIREMENT: THE AREA DELIVERS A HIGH QUALITY OF SERVICE, INCLUDING ADVOCACY, TO THE COURT, OTHER COURT USERS, AND VICTIMS AND WITNESSES; THE QUALITY OF SERVICE IS FREE FROM BIAS AND DISCRIMINATION, AND CONTRIBUTES TO THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COURT HEARINGS.

Overview

- 5.1 Area systems generally ensure cases are promptly reviewed and proceed speedily through the courts, although processes for requesting trial files from the police need tightening.
- 5.2 Cases are generally prosecuted competently and professionally by advocates, who are well prepared and properly instructed. Area higher court advocates (HCAs) are well regarded, and steps are being taken to involve them in the prosecution of Crown Court trials. The deployment of HCAs and CCU lawyers could be more efficient. Crown Court cases are usually prosecuted by appropriately experienced counsel, although the performance of some counsel was below what we would have expected.
- 5.3 The Area's structured programme to monitor the performance of in-house advocates should be extended to cover agents and counsel.
- 5.4 Lawyers and caseworkers attend court in good time to deal with issues in advance of court and are available to speak with witnesses. Early indications are that the witness standby and staggering protocol in the Crown Court is working well.

Selection and monitoring of advocates

STANDARD: SELECTION AND MONITORING OF ADVOCATES IN MAGISTRATES' AND CROWN COURT ENSURES CASES ARE PRESENTED TO A HIGH STANDARD AND IN A MANNER WHICH IS FREE FROM BIAS AND DISCRIMINATION, AND THAT SELECTION OF ADVOCATES COMPLIES WITH THE GENERAL DUTY UNDER THE RACE RELATIONS (AMENDMENT) ACT 2000.

- 5.5 We observed 19 advocates including Area lawyers and HCAs, counsel and one designated caseworker. Of the 13 CPS advocates observed, the performance of 11 was at least competent in all respects. Two advocates were below average. Although Crown Court cases are usually prosecuted by counsel with appropriate experience, the performance of some counsel was below what we would have expected.
- 5.6 Because of our increasing emphasis on all aspects of quality of service delivery at court, our advocacy observations were limited in nature and comparisons against past performance should be avoided as they may give a misleading impression.
- 5.7 CCU HCAs make regular appearances in the Crown Court, dealing with sentencing cases and appeals against sentence and conviction. CCU lawyers also attend the Crown Court to deal with bail applications and preliminary hearings in their cases.

- 5.8 During our inspection, we noted a number of occasions where several Area advocates attended the Crown Court to cover single cases, listed in the same court, where one would have sufficed. We also saw an instance where an HCA was available to cover appeals against sentence, which were instead covered by counsel. Whilst we appreciate the Area’s desire to provide a high level of service and development opportunities for lawyers, the deployment of both HCAs and CCU lawyers in the Crown Court could be more efficient. Area plans to establish a cadre of HCAs should provide an opportunity for more efficient deployment of advocates in the Crown Court.
- 5.9 CPS advocates are monitored as part of a structured programme. Unit Heads and operational managers monitor one in-house advocate per month and record their assessment in court attendance notes (CANs), with the results being incorporated into unit performance reports. The CCP also undertakes advocacy monitoring, wherever possible.
- 5.10 Agents in the magistrates’ court are monitored when they are initially recruited, and if adverse comments about performance are received from other court users. So far as counsel are concerned, monitoring arrangements are informal. The CCU Head and his assistants observe counsel on an ad hoc basis when they attend court. The views of CCU lawyers and caseworkers are usually communicated to colleagues by word of mouth. A more structured approach to monitoring is required if it is to be completely effective.

Aspects for improvement

- * Area HCAs and CCU lawyers at the Crown Court should be deployed more efficiently.
- * A structured system of monitoring the performance of agents and counsel should be introduced.

RECOMMENDATION

The Area introduce a formal system of monitoring and reporting upon performance of agents in the magistrates’ court, and counsel in the Crown Court.

Court preparation

STANDARD: PREPARATION FOR COURT IS EFFICIENT AND ENABLES BUSINESS TO PROCEED AND PROGRESS.

- 5.11 Area systems generally ensure cases are promptly reviewed and proceed speedily through the courts. The principal delay occurs early in the process, with particular delays in requests for summary trial files. Requests were made more than 24 hours after court in 32 out of 49 files examined for that purpose (65.3%). Performance was considerably better in relation to requests for committal files.

- 5.12 Summary trial reviews were carried out in good time in all but four of 48 cases we examined, and action taken to notify the police of witness requirements and serve statements for the trial was similarly prompt (91.3% and 92.5% of appropriate cases respectively). A pre-trial check is conducted in contested cases two weeks in advance of the trial date to ensure that all necessary actions have been taken to enable the case to proceed.
- 5.13 We discussed performance in relation to the preparation and service of committal papers at paragraph 4.9.
- 5.14 ‘Sent’ cases generally proceed on appropriate charges, though a few may result in pleas to a reduced charge, usually after the full file of evidence becomes available. CPS lawyers dealing with preliminary hearings are well prepared and able to deal with issues as they arise.

Strengths

- * Summary trial preparation is prompt.

Aspects for improvement

- * Requests for full files should be made within 24 hours of the court hearing.

Attendance at court

STANDARD: STAFF ATTENDANCE AT COURT IS TIMELY AND PROFESSIONAL, AND THE CORRECT LEVELS OF SUPPORT ARE PROVIDED.

- 5.15 Lawyer and caseworker attendance is prompt in both the magistrates’ court and Crown Court, providing other court users with ample time to discuss cases.
- 5.16 Caseworkers are usually available in each court, though they may be required to attend to other duties at certain stages of trial. The Area has a policy of sending level A caseworkers to Crown Court as part of their personal development. There have been instances when theirs has been the only CPS presence and this should be avoided.
- 5.17 It is currently Area practice for B1 caseworkers to cover their own cases at court, even when transferred to the Crown Court centre covered by the other CCU. This has resulted in two caseworkers covering the same court and does not represent the most efficient use of Area resources. Although case ownership is important and there may be times when it is appropriate for a caseworker to continue to cover their case even if this results in duplication, this should only be on a needs basis rather than as a matter of routine.

Aspects for improvement

- * There is a need for more efficient deployment of caseworkers when cases are transferred.

Witnesses

STANDARD: WITNESSES ARE TREATED WITH CONSIDERATION AT COURT AND RECEIVE APPROPRIATE SUPPORT AND INFORMATION.

- 5.18 The Area has agreed a protocol with the police and the Crown Court to stagger the attendance of witnesses in long trials. Although the protocol is relatively new, the early indications are positive. Witness waiting times remain high, however, partly due to witnesses in more straightforward cases not being released early enough once their attendance is no longer required.
- 5.19 The Area provides the Witness Service with lists of witnesses attending court so that appropriate assistance can be offered, although systems to notify Witness Service when trials have been withdrawn from the list could be tightened up.
- 5.20 Prosecutors in the magistrates' courts introduce themselves to witnesses and keep them informed of progress. Caseworkers in the Crown Court keep witnesses informed of events at court and are willing to discuss issues with them when a case is concluded. Although most counsel are happy to speak to witnesses, some are still reluctant to do so. The additional rape instructions in briefs include the need for counsel to discuss developments with witnesses in appropriate circumstances. Consideration should be given to extending these instructions to all cases.

Strengths

- * A joint witness protocol has greatly improved arrangements for the attendance of witnesses at the Crown Court.

Accommodation

STANDARD: THE CPS HAS ADEQUATE ACCOMMODATION AT COURT AND THERE ARE SUFFICIENT FACILITIES TO ENABLE BUSINESS TO BE CONDUCTED EFFICIENTLY.

- 5.21 The standard of CPS accommodation at court is generally good, with appropriate facilities being provided to ensure that papers can be faxed to court and photocopied. The accommodation at Knutsford Crown Court is poor, however, with no fax machine or photocopier. The CPS room is situated next to the Witness Service suite. The walls are not properly soundproofed, which makes confidential communications difficult for both CPS and the Witness Service.

Aspects for improvement

- * CPS facilities at Knutsford Crown Court need improving.

6. DIRECT COMMUNICATION WITH VICTIMS

Overview

- 6.1 Initial indications are that the Area has implemented this initiative well. The Area has identified aspects which require improvement, such as poor file endorsements and timeliness of letters to victims. An action plan is being devised to tackle shortcomings, which will include improved training for caseworkers. An external review has commended the Area on the way it has implemented the initiative.

Area model

STANDARD: THE AREA HAS DETERMINED THE MODEL TO BE USED FOR DIRECT COMMUNICATION WITH VICTIMS AND HAS ESTABLISHED APPROPRIATE PROCESSES TO DELIVER THE INITIATIVE EFFECTIVELY.

- 6.2 The CPS has a policy of notifying victims in cases in which a charge is discontinued, or substantially altered, of that fact and explaining the reasons for the action. The Area established a Victim Information Bureau (VIB) in May 2002 to deal with such cases.
- 6.3 A review of Area systems was carried out by a joint team comprising a representative from CPS and an external consultant. Their report commended senior managers on the way the project had been rolled out within the Area, particularly in respect of communications to staff at the start of the initiative and the provision of performance updates on compliance and timeliness. The compliance review undertaken in the Area has become a source of national best practice. The CPS has agreed to undertake the additional responsibility of keeping relatives of victims in cases involving a fatality informed of case progress. Timeliness of sending the letters has been identified by the external review and internally as an area for improvement and the VIB manager has developed an action plan to move the project forward.

Staff training

STANDARD: STAFF INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS FOR DIRECT COMMUNICATION WITH VICTIMS HAVE BEEN PROPERLY TRAINED.

- 6.4 Area lawyers received national training prior to the introduction of the scheme. Although lawyer training was generally regarded as effective, the training for caseworkers appears not to have met their needs in full. The Area has plans to address this shortcoming.

“Identifiable” victim

STANDARD: ALL CASES WITH AN “IDENTIFIABLE” VICTIM ARE PROPERLY IDENTIFIED. LETTERS ARE SENT TO VICTIMS IN APPROPRIATE CIRCUMSTANCES, ARE TIMELY AND APPROPRIATELY DRAFTED.

- 6.5 Failure to identify cases within the scheme has been a cause for concern. The problem has been acknowledged and steps planned to address the issue.

- 6.6 A decline in timeliness over the first six months of the scheme coincided with an increase in the number of letters sent to victims each month, as the scheme became more familiar to staff. Area managers plan to address problems with timeliness and identification of relevant cases by giving each lawyer an objective in their Forward Job Plan linked to the scheme.
- 6.7 Although appropriate letters are being sent to victims and the external review commented on their consistently high standard, there is frequently scope to demonstrate greater empathy with the victim and give better explanations of the difference between charges.

<p>Aspects for improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">* Lawyers should endorse files with clear instructions in appropriate cases.* Administrative staff should check files after court more thoroughly.* Consideration should be given to looking at ways to demonstrate empathy in letter-writing, whilst maintaining professionalism.* Explanations of the difference between charges could be more detailed.* Timeliness needs to be improved.
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Arrangements for review

STANDARD: THE SUCCESS OF ARRANGEMENTS AND PROCESSES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DIRECT COMMUNICATION WITH WITNESSES IS REVIEWED.

- 6.8 The VIB manager collects data on the scheme and prepares a monthly report for the AMT. Issues are discussed and identified and, where appropriate, notified to staff. The lessons learned so far will be incorporated within the VIB action plan.
- 6.9 The resources used to implement and run the scheme are measured, staff resources are reviewed and changes made to staffing levels, as necessary. This has resulted in the temporary promotion of one member of staff and arrangements to recruit another.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">* The scheme is regularly monitored and action taken as a result.

7. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

KEY REQUIREMENT: PERFORMANCE AND RISK ARE SYSTEMATICALLY MONITORED AND EVALUATED, AND USED TO INFORM FUTURE DECISIONS.

Overview

- 7.1 The Area is developing a performance management culture in which standards are being set, performance regularly monitored and action taken as a result. Managers are committed to continuous improvement. The Area's self-assessment in preparation for our inspection demonstrated a good level of internal awareness and understanding of Area performance. Performance information is increasingly being shared with CJS partners and risk is beginning to be assessed.

Performance standards and monitoring

STANDARD: STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE ARE SET FOR KEY ASPECTS OF WORK AND COMMUNICATED TO STAFF. PERFORMANCE IS REGULARLY MONITORED BY SENIOR AND MIDDLE MANAGEMENT AGAINST PLANS, OBJECTIVES, TARGETS AND STANDARDS; EVALUATED; AND ACTION TAKEN AS A RESULT.

- 7.2 The Area has begun to develop performance standards since the last inspection report, including the introduction of the review standard, the disclosure training pack and a file housekeeping standard.
- 7.3 Managers at every level have a performance management role and are expected to play a part in monitoring and improving Area performance. Unit Heads are responsible for the overall performance of their units and report directly to the CCP through comprehensive quarterly performance reports, which are discussed in performance meetings. DCPs and Assistant Heads monitor performance through their daily contact with staff and through CANs. Unit BMs take the lead in monitoring processes and systems.
- 7.4 The CCP and Unit Heads hold quarterly casework surgeries where trends are identified and discussed, and action proposed to address deficiencies in Area performance.
- 7.5 There is scope to follow up actions flowing from the quarterly performance meetings more systematically by, for example, interim reporting on progress. There is also scope for casework performance trends to be analysed and for the monitoring of casework processes to be strengthened to enable the Area to improve timeliness.

Strengths

- * The Area has developed standards of performance to address areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report.
- * Performance against standards is monitored and action taken as a result.

- * All managers play an active performance management role and regularly monitor performance.
- * Comprehensive quarterly performance reports, followed up by meetings with the CCP and ABM.
- * Thorough court attendance notes and adverse case reports are prepared.
- * Quarterly casework surgeries are held.

Aspects for improvement

- * Actions flowing from quarterly performance meetings should be followed up in a more regular and systematic fashion through interim reporting.
- * Consideration should be given to identifying trends from casework surgeries on an annual basis and communicating the outcome to Area staff.
- * Monitoring of casework processes need strengthening in order to improve timeliness performance.

Joint performance management

STANDARD: SYSTEMS ARE IN PLACE FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF PERFORMANCE JOINTLY WITH CJS PARTNERS.

- 7.6 The Area, together with CJS partners, jointly fund the post of the Cheshire Criminal Justice Co-ordinator, whose role is to support existing joint working through the Area Criminal Justice Strategy Committee and its sub-groups. The Co-ordinator also facilitates the sharing of performance information across the area and follows up actions.
- 7.7 Joint performance management (JPM) arrangements between the Area and the Cheshire police are well established. Adverse case reports are shared and local managers regularly meet with police counterparts to discuss performance trends. Area TQ1 return rates (which measure police performance in relation to timeliness and quality of case papers) improved to over 90% in October 2002, as compared to 70% in May 2002. Closer working with the police is a standing item on team meeting agendas.
- 7.8 Area PYO co-ordinators regularly share PYO performance information with magistrates' courts counterparts. Area managers observe the operation of the magistrates' courts listing protocol during the course of their advocacy monitoring and collect data on the court sitting lengths and double-listing, albeit it on an ad hoc basis. This information is shared with local MCS managers in the area and there may be scope to formalise the information exchange through Local Criminal Justice Board machinery.

- 7.9 Sharing the data we recommended, at paragraph 4.7, be collected in relation to cracked and ineffective adult and PYO trials, would further enhance existing joint performance management arrangements.

Strengths

- * The Area's participation in joint funding of the Criminal Justice Co-ordinator post.
- * Adverse case reports are shared with the police at an Area and local level, and regular meetings held to discuss trends.
- * Improving TQ1 return rates.

Aspects for improvement

- * There is scope to share data identifying reasons for cracked and ineffective trials in adult and PYO cases to inform work on persistent offender initiatives.

Risk management

STANDARD: RISK IS KEPT UNDER REVIEW AND APPROPRIATELY MANAGED.

- 7.10 The Area identified risks in its Business Plan for 2002-03, but the Plan did not evolve in light of changing circumstances. The Area has started to identify and assess key risks to be annexed to the annual Certificate of Assurance required by CPS Headquarters. As risk management is an essential part of an Area's planning process, the Area will wish to draw on HMCPSI's Planning Guidance for CPS Areas and Service Centres (December 2002) for assistance. We discuss the incorporation of risk in business planning later in our report.

Continuous improvement

STANDARD: THE AREA HAS DEVELOPED A CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT.

- 7.11 The Area is developing a performance management culture and managers have made a concerted effort to improve since the last inspection. The systems of quarterly unit performance reporting and casework surgeries are evidence of Area management's desire to continually improve.

Strengths

- * Progress against the action plan following the last inspection is reviewed quarterly and action taken as a result.
- * Consideration is given to HMCPSI reports and assurances sought about Area performance and weaknesses.

Accounting for performance

STANDARD: THE AREA CAN ACCOUNT FOR PERFORMANCE.

- 7.12 Existing Area monitoring systems enable the CCP to give CPS Headquarters assurances as to current performance, although the existing assurances relating to advocacy should be qualified until a more structured system of monitoring counsel and agents is in place.

8. PEOPLE MANAGEMENT AND PEOPLE RESULTS

KEY REQUIREMENT:

- * HUMAN RESOURCES ARE PLANNED TO ENSURE THAT STAFF ARE DEPLOYED EFFICIENTLY, THAT THE AREA CARRIES OUT ITS WORK COST EFFECTIVELY AND THAT THE AREA MEETS ITS STATUTORY DUTIES AS AN EMPLOYER, AND THOSE THAT ARISE FROM INTERNAL POLICIES;
 - * RESULTS INDICATE THAT STAFF ARE DEPLOYED EFFICIENTLY, THAT WORK IS CARRIED OUT COST-EFFECTIVELY, AND THAT THE AREA MEETS ITS RESPONSIBILITIES, BOTH STATUTORY AND THOSE THAT ARISE FROM INTERNAL POLICIES, IN SUCH A WAY THAT ENSURES THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MODERN, DIVERSE ORGANISATION WHICH STAFF CAN TAKE PRIDE IN.
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Overview

- 8.1 The Area has systems in place to monitor staffing levels and movements of staff on a monthly basis. Staffing levels are generally commensurate with workload and there is an equitable distribution of staff. The Area has adopted a prudent approach to the recruitment of staff and the management of salaries.
- 8.2 The AMT policy decision to ensure that the CCU is fully staffed at all times needs to be kept under constant review, to ensure that CCU staff are deployed effectively and MCU performance is not adversely affected. A recent rotation exercise between the units was handled well but there is scope for the greater involvement of line managers in other staff moves.
- 8.3 The Area has a very good approach to training and is committed to staff development. The performance appraisal system operates well. The Area has recognised the need to update its communications strategy in light of the changing environment in which it operates. The Area has experienced problems with sickness levels over recent years but has adopted sensible approaches to tackling the situation.
- 8.4 The Area has an effective Equality and Diversity Plan and its work in the Connecting Communities project is particularly positive.

Human resource planning

STANDARD: HUMAN RESOURCE NEEDS ARE SYSTEMATICALLY AND CONTINUOUSLY PLANNED.

- 8.5 The Area monitors the numbers of staff in post on a monthly basis and staffing levels in the respective units are discussed at AMT meetings. Whilst managers discuss and react to unexpected sickness and immediate operational needs when they arise, there is scope to improve on existing arrangements by better planning to ensure that the timing of staff movements minimise disruption to operational efficiency.

- 8.6 The Area has an effective rotation policy for staff moves between the units and in a recent exercise was able to accommodate the vast majority of staff preferences. There is, however, scope for the greater involvement of line managers in staff moves driven by day-to-day operational requirements, in appropriate circumstances.

Aspects for improvement

- * The Area needs to improve planning and co-ordination of staff movements and increase the involvement of line managers in appropriate circumstances.

RECOMMENDATION

The Area

- * **institute mechanisms for improved planning and co-ordination of staff movements; and**
- * **increase the involvement of line managers in decisions in appropriate circumstances**

in order that the impacts of staff movements on local operational efficiency are considered in advance and addressed.

Staff structure

STANDARD: STAFF STRUCTURE AND NUMBERS ENABLE WORK TO BE CARRIED OUT COST EFFECTIVELY.

- 8.7 The AMT adopted a deliberate strategy in early 2001 to recruit more junior staff to replace more expensive staff taking retirement. However, this strategy would have led to a significant decrease in the Area's activity-based costing allowance had the Area not succeeded in securing a 5% underpin.
- 8.8 Staffing levels are generally commensurate with workload and there is an equitable distribution of staff. The AMT has taken a policy decision to ensure that the CCU is fully staffed at all times, occasionally at the expense of the MCU. To date this strategy has not adversely impacted on the performance of the MCU but needs to be kept under constant review. In order to continue to justify the priority given to the CCU, it is important that efficient use is made of CCU lawyers appearing as advocates in the Crown Court and B1 caseworkers.

Strengths

- * Prudent approach to salary management.

Staff development

STANDARD: STAFF CAPABILITIES ARE IDENTIFIED, SUSTAINED AND DEVELOPED.

- 8.9 The Area has a very good approach to training. The Area Training Plan is informed by individual and generic training requirements and is reviewed regularly and updated. The Area Training Team (established in 2002) integrate individual Personal Development Plans into the Area Training Plan. Induction arrangements are well developed.
- 8.10 The AMT is committed to staff development and a number of development packages have been devised to give individuals opportunities to plan for their future career. In addition to the rotation system between units, the Area encourages secondments between units for both legal and non-legal staff. There is also scope for advocacy secondments to metropolitan areas for lawyers, and secondments to other CJS agencies. The Area is shortly holding a two-day career-planning workshop to be attended by staff across grades.
- 8.11 The Area has designated specialists in different areas of casework and administrative systems.

Strengths

- * The Area's commitment to training and developing its staff.

Performance review

STANDARD: STAFF PERFORMANCE AND DEVELOPMENT IS CONTINUOUSLY REVIEWED AND TARGETS AGREED.

- 8.12 The majority (88%) of performance appraisals for the year ending March 2002 were completed and submitted to CPS Headquarters on time, with the balance submitted within a month of the deadline. Interim reviews are conducted at least once a year. Staff objectives are set with a view to linking with Area objectives. Our recommendation on business planning would enable more focussed objectives to be set.
- 8.13 Feedback on casework quality is used to inform the performance appraisal system.

Communication

STANDARD: MANAGEMENT HAS AN EFFECTIVE DIALOGUE WITH ITS STAFF AND FOSTERS A CLIMATE OF INVOLVEMENT.

- 8.14 Levels of communication are generally good within the Area and staff are encouraged to participate in Area working groups, as well as local and national CPS initiatives. There is an active and effective Whitley Council. Unit meetings are held regularly.

- 8.15 The 2002 staff survey indicated an improving level of satisfaction among Area staff, with 34% of staff reporting an improvement in their satisfaction levels over the last two years, compared with 29% nationally. A stress group was set up to tackle issues arising from the survey, with a wide membership drawn from across the Area, and an action plan produced.
- 8.16 The Area staff newsletter is widely distributed to all three offices and contributions from all staff are encouraged. However, there is a perception by some staff that the newsletter caters mainly for the Chester office. The newsletter may benefit by having separate sections for contributions from Crewe and Warrington in order to encourage all staff to feel involved with its publication. To overcome staff inertia, the Area should consider having designated representatives from each office responsible for co-ordinating office contributions.
- 8.17 The reasons behind staff movements from Warrington to Chester, from the MCU to the CCU and following the recent rotation exercise, have not been communicated across the Area as effectively as they could have been.
- 8.18 The Area has recognised the need to update its communication strategy in light of the changing environment, organisational change and the introduction of the Connect 42 and Compass computer technology. The revised strategy should include arrangements for action planning and regular review to test its continued effectiveness.

Strengths

- * Active encouragement of staff to become involved in local and national initiatives.
- * Improving levels of staff satisfaction.

Aspects for improvement

- * Consideration should be given to appointing office representatives responsible for co-ordinating entries for the staff newsletter.

Employment practice

STANDARD: MANAGEMENT MEETS ITS STATUTORY OBLIGATION AS AN EMPLOYER AND DEMONSTRATES GOOD EMPLOYMENT PRACTICE.

- 8.19 The Area has experienced problems with sickness levels over recent years and its sickness figures for the year to December 2001 stood at an average of 16.5 working days per employee, against a target of 9.1 days. Sickness rates for the year to December 2002 have improved considerably to an average of 11.3 working days per employee. The high sickness figure can be attributed to a small number of staff on long-term sick leave. After deducting long-term sickness absences, the figure stands at 5.4 days. The ABM is aware of, and actively pursuing, the resolution of these cases and continues to adopt sensible approaches to tackling the situation.

- 8.20 The stress group gave voice to the perception among some staff that a ‘blame culture’ might exist within the Area, but we found no firm evidence to support this. However, we did detect frustration amongst some staff that negative aspects of performance appeared to be highlighted by managers, but that positive aspects were not. A revised communications strategy would assist the Area in tackling this issue.

Equality and diversity

STANDARD: ACTION HAS BEEN TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT CPS EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY INITIATIVES AND ALL STAFF TREATED EQUALLY AND FAIRLY.

- 8.21 The Area Equality and Diversity Plan is an effective and detailed plan, which allocates responsibilities for action. The AMT reviews progress against the plan quarterly. The plan could be improved by setting time scales for actions.
- 8.22 The Area’s staffing profile includes 67% female members of staff. Targets are beginning to be set to address the under-representation of women in senior grades.
- 8.23 The Area employs 3% minority ethnic staff against a target of 3%, which is set higher than the percentage of the working population in the county (currently 1%). The Area employs 5% of staff with a disability.
- 8.24 Work has been undertaken with the landlords of the Chester and Warrington offices to develop an accommodation specification to meet Disability Discrimination Act 2000 access requirements.
- 8.25 The ABM and MCU Head are members of the Cheshire Racial Equality Council’s Connecting Communities Steering Group, whose work includes a project to promote employment opportunities for black and minority ethnic applicants. The Area has successfully recruited members of staff under the scheme.

Health and safety

STANDARD: MECHANISMS ARE IN PLACE TO ADDRESS REQUIREMENTS UNDER HEALTH AND SAFETY LEGISLATION.

- 8.26 We were satisfied with the Area’s health and safety arrangements. The Area Secretariat has a designated Health and Safety Co-ordinator who also oversees accommodation issues. Unit BMs have responsibility for health and safety issues in their units.

9. PARTNERSHIPS AND RESOURCES

KEY REQUIREMENT: THE AREA PLANS AND MANAGES ITS EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS AND RESOURCES IN WAYS THAT SUPPORT ITS POLICY AND STRATEGY AND THE EFFICIENT OPERATION OF ITS PROCESSES.

Overview

- 9.1 The Area is active in seeking ways to develop and enhance partnerships with CJS agencies at all levels in order to improve performance.
- 9.2 The Area enjoys good working relationships with CPS Headquarters and the CCP currently sits on the national CPS Board. The Area worked closely with CPS Headquarters' Internal Resources and Performance Branch and Management Audit Services (MAS) to resolve the funding issue resulting from its decision to recruit more junior staff. The Area intends working with MAS to conduct an Excellence Model self-assessment of the MCU in 2003.
- 9.3 Information technology is deployed appropriately. Revisions to the communications strategy should take into account the Connect 42 computer system and, soon to be introduced Compass case management system.
- 9.4 Office accommodation is managed effectively. Improvements have been made to the door entry arrangements at Chester, which was a cause for concern during the last inspection. Active steps have been taken to improve accommodation for CPS staff based at Crewe Police Station.

10. POLICY AND STRATEGY

KEY REQUIREMENT: THE AREA HAS A CLEAR SENSE OF PURPOSE AND MANAGERS HAVE ESTABLISHED A RELEVANT DIRECTION FOR THE AREA, COMPLEMENTED BY RELEVANT POLICIES AND SUPPORTED BY PLANS, OBJECTIVE, TARGETS AND PROCESSES, AND MECHANISMS FOR REVIEW.

Overview

- 10.1 The AMT has a clear sense of purpose and is alive to the needs and expectations of stakeholders. The Area is an active member of the local CJS and was particularly influential in promoting area race initiatives. The Area's involvement with the local community is steadily developing and the Area is a key player in the local Connecting Communities project.
- 10.2 Area performance management systems enable managers to take informed decisions on future policy and strategy.

Stakeholders

STANDARD: POLICY AND STRATEGY ARE BASED ON THE PRESENT AND FUTURE NEEDS, AND EXPECTATIONS, OF STAKEHOLDERS.

- 10.3 Members of the AMT are aware of the needs and expectations of stakeholders within the CJS. The Area Business Plan and CPS priorities are communicated to CJS stakeholders. The CCP acts as Chair for the Shadow Local Criminal Justice Board. The Area is considered to be a key player in the Joint Action Group, whose membership includes the police, MCS, representatives from the Crown Court and National Probation Service.
- 10.4 Unit Heads and the ABM represent the Area at countywide JPM meetings and in strategic meetings with the MCS and the Court Service. DCPs and Assistant Heads represent the Area at meetings with other operational managers. Area specialists meet counterparts in the police and courts to discuss the progress of local initiatives including PYOs, domestic violence and witness staggering in the Crown Court.
- 10.5 The Area recently seconded two administrative staff members to the MCS to assist with a backlog in resulting.
- 10.6 The Area is increasingly focussing on the needs and expectations of the local community. The CCP has been credited with being the driving force behind the work of the Area Criminal Justice Strategy Committee Race Sub-Group, which is soon to publish its Race to Justice action plan. The Area's involvement on the Connecting Communities project has been singled out for praise locally. We comment further on community engagement at paragraphs 11.25 to 11.27.

Strengths

- * The Area is responsive to issues and will discuss problems with appropriate agencies either in formal liaison meeting or ad hoc as they arise.
- * The CCP was instrumental in driving forward CJS area race initiatives.
- * Area involvement in the Connecting Communities project is very positive.

Performance measurement

STANDARD: POLICY AND STRATEGY ARE BASED ON INFORMATION FROM PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT, RESEARCH AND RELATED ACTIVITIES.

- 10.7 The Area's performance management systems enable the AMT to take informed decisions on the future policy and strategy.
- 10.8 A joint police/CPS co-location review of Crewe MCU highlighted lessons to be learned for the future. It is important that these lessons are built into the planning stage for the Chester co-location project. The Chester co-location project team already benefits from the inclusion of members of the Crewe project team and will be further enhanced by the addition of the senior Area representative we recommend at paragraph 11.15.

Review

STANDARD: POLICY AND STRATEGY ARE DEVELOPED, REVIEWED AND UPDATED.

- 10.9 Whilst progress against the Area Business Plan and Equality and Diversity Plans are discussed at AMT meetings, the strategic and high-level nature of both plans makes it difficult for them to be continuously reviewed. Our recommendation at paragraph 11.20 will enable the AMT to monitor progress against plans more systematically in the future.

Framework of key processes

STANDARD: POLICY AND STRATEGY ARE DEVELOPED THROUGH A FRAMEWORK OF KEY PROCESSES.

- 10.10 The Area has begun to establish a framework of key processes needed to deliver its policy and strategy. The Area's developing performance management system, induction and training arrangements and the successful introduction of the VIB are of particular note.

11. LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

KEY REQUIREMENT: LEADERS DEVELOP VISION AND VALUES THAT LEAD TO LONG-TERM SUCCESS AND IMPLEMENT THESE VIA APPROPRIATE ACTIONS AND BEHAVIOURS. IN PARTICULAR, WORKING ARRANGEMENTS ARE IN PLACE, WHICH ENSURE THAT THE AREA IS CONTROLLED AND DIRECTED TO ACHIEVE ITS AIMS AND OBJECTIVES CONSISTENTLY AND WITH PROPRIETY.

Overview

- 11.1 The Area is well led and well managed. Area managers are open, approachable and have a clear vision of what they hope to achieve. Effective management and organisational structures encourage the continuous monitoring and awareness of performance and enable the AMT to work towards the delivery of its aims and objectives.
- 11.2 The Area Business Plan demonstrates a good strategic focus but could be improved by detailed action planning and increased focus on unit and operational issues.
- 11.3 Financial management arrangements are sound.

Vision and values

STANDARD: VISION AND VALUES ARE DEVELOPED AND SUPPORT A CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT.

- 11.4 Managers are open and approachable and, in the main, visible. They are collegiate in their approach and have a clear vision of what they want the Area to achieve. The Area is working with the police to secure improvements in performance in relation to Macclesfield cases. They have a clear commitment to continuous improvement.
- 11.5 The CCP covers courts across the Area in an effort to reinforce his profile as well as assess casework quality. The Unit Heads and unit BMs split their time between Chester and Warrington on a weekly basis. The CCP, ABM and MCU Head regularly visit Crewe MCU.
- 11.6 The CCP and ABM are conscious that the location of the Area Secretariat in Chester restricts the amount of time they are able to spend in the other offices. The CCP and ABM are planning a series of Area roadshows in order to discuss progress made against objectives, and set out the challenges facing the Area. The establishment of a regular programme of visits by the CCP and ABM would help to improve their visibility to all staff.

Strengths

- * Managers have a clear vision of what they want the Area to achieve.
- * There is clear evidence of a commitment to continuous improvement from managers.

Staff recognition

STANDARD: MANAGERS ACTIVELY MOTIVATE, RECOGNISE AND SUPPORT THEIR STAFF.

- 11.7 We commented on the extent to which managers have a dialogue with staff and foster a culture of involvement at paragraphs 8.14 to 8.18. Area and unit performance is discussed in team meetings, which are held regularly. Performance data is also posted on notice boards and included in the staff newsletter. The Area recently held a successful training weekend. A reward strategy has been developed.
- 11.8 Given the generally healthy state of staff morale, it is important that the Area tackle an undercurrent at Warrington of feeling the 'poor relation' by involving line managers in decisions on staff movements and communicating the reasons behind them.

Management structure

STANDARD: THE AREA HAS DEVELOPED AN EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE TO DELIVER AREA STRATEGY AND OBJECTIVES.

- 11.9 The AMT is a tightly knit team; all managers feel empowered to take decisions and there is a collegiate approach to tackling issues. An effective management structure is in place across the units, freeing up the Unit Heads to take a strategic approach to managing the units, whilst DCPs and Assistant Heads concentrate on day-to-day operational issues.
- 11.10 The role of unit BMs is relatively new and still developing. The BMs have a direct operational link with their units, supporting the Unit Heads, but their jobs are primarily business management. They report directly to their Unit Head on issues relating to casework processes, human resources and finance, all of which have a bearing on the management of the Area as a whole. Although contact with the ABM is frequent, it is informal, and there are instances where lines of communication have broken down. In view of this, there is scope to formalise the link between the BMs and the ABM both in terms of performance reporting and input into their performance appraisals.

Strengths

- * The AMT is a tightly knit management team with a collegiate approach to decision-making.
- * There is an effective management structure which promotes strategic and operational focus.

Aspects for improvement

- * The reporting links between the ABM and the unit Business Managers need to be strengthened to ensure that their roles are consistent with each other.
- * The ABM should have a formal input to the unit Business Managers' appraisals.

Organisational structure

STANDARD: THE AREA HAS DEVELOPED AN EFFECTIVE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE TO DELIVER AREA STRATEGY AND OBJECTIVES.

- 11.11 The Area has developed an effective organisational structure, with transparent lines of responsibility, which encourages the continuous monitoring and awareness of performance. The respective roles and responsibilities of the MCU and CCU are clearly established and understood by staff.
- 11.12 The division of responsibilities between the Unit Heads and operational managers works well, but there is a danger that the absence of formal instructions setting out the performance management responsibilities of the respective managers could lead to duplication of effort.
- 11.13 The MCU Head holds regular managers' meetings, which include Level D and B1 office managers and the unit BM, at alternate venues. These meetings provide an opportunity for managers to feedback issues of concern to staff within their units, as well as encouraging a common approach across the Area. The CCU might benefit from the introduction of similar meetings.
- 11.14 Co-location at Crewe has been a success story, notwithstanding accommodation problems. Managers have noted significant increases in performance in relation to Crewe cases, in contrast to Macclesfield cases, which the Crewe office also serves. The Area is working with the police to secure improvements in performance in relation to Macclesfield cases. Staff morale is high and they enjoy working at Crewe, even though they have experienced significant changes in working patterns and practices.
- 11.15 The Area recognises that progress towards co-location at Chester has moved slowly. However, a project team is now in place with representation from members of the Crewe co-location team. The co-location project at Chester is likely to prove more problematic than at Crewe, due to accommodation difficulties, which limits the extent to which co-location can take place. As a result, the Area needs to appoint a project leader of sufficient seniority to be able to commit the Area to action and drive the project forward.

Strengths

- * The Area has developed an effective organisational structure, with transparent lines of responsibility.
- * Co-location at Crewe has been success.

Aspects for improvement

- * Formal instructions setting out the respective performance management roles and responsibilities of unit managers would avoid duplication of effort.
- * Progress towards co-location at Chester has moved slowly.

RECOMMENDATION

The AMT appoint a project leader of sufficient seniority able to commit the Area to action in order to drive forward the co-location project at Chester.

Action plans

STANDARD: EFFECTIVE PLANS OF ACTION, WHICH IDENTIFY KEY ISSUES, AND WHICH REFLECT CPS AND CJS STRATEGIC PRIORITIES, AND LOCAL NEEDS, ARE IN PLACE.

- 11.16 The Area Business Plan for 2002-03 and the Area Equality and Diversity Plan demonstrate good strategic focus and links with corporate business objectives. The Area has recognised the need to address developments in the CJS and include the Area approach to the achievement locally of the new PSA targets in future planning. Risk assessment has started and is evolving.
- 11.17 Headquarters guidance on the preparation of Area Business Plans 2002-03 was issued in March 2002 and all Areas had to work to a tight deadline. The guidance specified that the Inspectorate consider it good practice to develop action plans, allocating responsibilities and timescales for action to support Business Plans. As things stand, however, the current Business Plan lacks the detailed action planning needed to ensure that the objectives contained in the Plan are capable of being monitored and achieved. It is important that the plan for the forthcoming financial year is sufficiently detailed with actions clearly identified, responsibilities assigned and time scales for action set. Linkages should be made to the Area's budget and other plans such as the training plan and VIB action plan.
- 11.18 The ABM is primarily responsible for drawing up the Business Plan, which is vetted by the CCP and the two Unit Heads. Staff involvement in the business planning process at all levels is minimal.
- 11.19 Whilst the current Business Plan is a good high-level strategic document, there are tenuous links to individual and unit activities. The Area has recognised this and as a first step plans to conduct an Excellence Model self-assessment in the MCU. The precise timing of this exercise is uncertain, however, and it is unlikely that it would be sufficiently well advanced to inform the development of the Area Business Plan for 2003-04 (at least for the first quarter's activities).

11.20 The ABM intends to hold workshops to assist her in developing the Business Plan. It is important that Area staff are involved in the development of the Plan. This could take the form of a self-assessment exercise using focus groups, or a cross section of staff across the various grades and units. HMCPSP's Planning Guidance for CPS Areas and Service Centres (December 2002) gives examples of ways to include staff in the planning process.

Strengths

- * Good strategic focus and links with corporate business objectives in the Area Business Plan and Equality and Diversity Plan 2002-03.
- * Recognition of the need for Area Business Plan to reflect CJS initiatives and targets.

Aspects for improvement

- * Actions need to be clearly identified, responsibilities assigned and time scales for action set in future Business Plans.
- * Unit and operational issues need to be fully reflected in the Business Plan.
- * Staff involvement needed in the planning process.

RECOMMENDATION

- * **Unit and operational issues are fully reflected in future Area Business Plans;**
- * **Actions are clearly identified, responsibilities assigned and time scales for action set;**
- * **Risk is integrated; and**
- * **The Area involve staff in the business planning process.**

Co-operation with other agencies

STANDARD: THE AREA CO-OPERATES WITH OTHERS IN ACHIEVING AIMS SET FOR THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM.

11.21 We discussed the extent to which the Area engages with its CJS partners earlier in our report. The Area is currently planning how it will deliver its objectives and PSA targets together with its partners through the Shadow Local Criminal Justice Board, chaired by the CCP. At the time of inspection, the Board was considering the national draft Framework Delivery Agreement.

Financial management

STANDARD: FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY ARE CLEARLY ESTABLISHED AND SYSTEMS ASSURE REGULARITY, PROPRIETY AND PROBITY IN THE MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC MONEY.

- 11.22 The Area has operated its current financial control system since April 2002 and its financial management systems have improved as a result. The Area Secretariat produces monthly management budget updates, which cover finance and staffing and contain an analysis of the budget position by the ABM. There is scope to link resources to planned activities, particularly in the case of resources allocated specifically for performance improvement. The Inspectorate's Planning Guidance will assist the Area in this regard.
- 11.23 Deviations from budget have been anticipated and appropriate action taken by the ABM/CCP. The Area's prudent approach to salary management has been recognised by CPS Headquarters.
- 11.24 The CCU BM has a good grip on managing the graduated fee scheme, monitoring expenditure on a weekly basis. Early training and the designation of an Area fees clerk to administer the scheme, have helped the Area become the best performing Area in terms of managing prosecution costs through the scheme. The CCU Head and BM manage fees in high-cost cases.

Strengths

- * Financial management systems are improving, with monthly management reports produced and analysis by the ABM.
- * Projected under spends anticipated, discussed with CPS Headquarters and appropriate action taken.
- * Awareness of the budgetary impact from long-term sickness absences and salary increases demonstrated.
- * System for managing and monitoring graduated fees.
- * Overspend on agents at Crewe CJU is being addressed, partly by increasing lawyer numbers.

Aspects for improvement

- * There is scope to link planned activity to resources, particularly in the case of resources allocated for performance improvement.

Community engagement

STANDARD: THE AREA IS RESPONSIVE TO THE VIEWS OF AN INFORMED, DIVERSE COMMUNITY.

- 11.25 Although there is clearly some way to go towards building the trust and confidence of black and minority ethnic groups in the CPS and CJS, Area managers are active in their efforts to reach out and respond to the needs of a diverse community.
- 11.26 We have already commented on the Area's increasing engagement with the local community. The Area is an affiliate organisation of the Cheshire Race Equality Council and plays an active part in the work of the Council and its sub-groups. Racial incident monitoring data is shared with other agencies on the Race Issues Group. The Area's involvement with the Connecting Communities project has been particularly positive. The Area has also participated in a careers awareness day with other CJS agencies and the Racial Equality Council.
- 11.27 The Unit Heads enjoy contact with College of Law and act as mentors to black and minority ethnic students. Area representatives have recently attended events to highlight the work of the Race Issues Group, an event organised by the Chester Asian Council and visited local Hindu and Sikh temples to discuss the work of the CPS. The ABM has met with representatives of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities to explain CPS policy in relation to homophobic crime.

Complaints

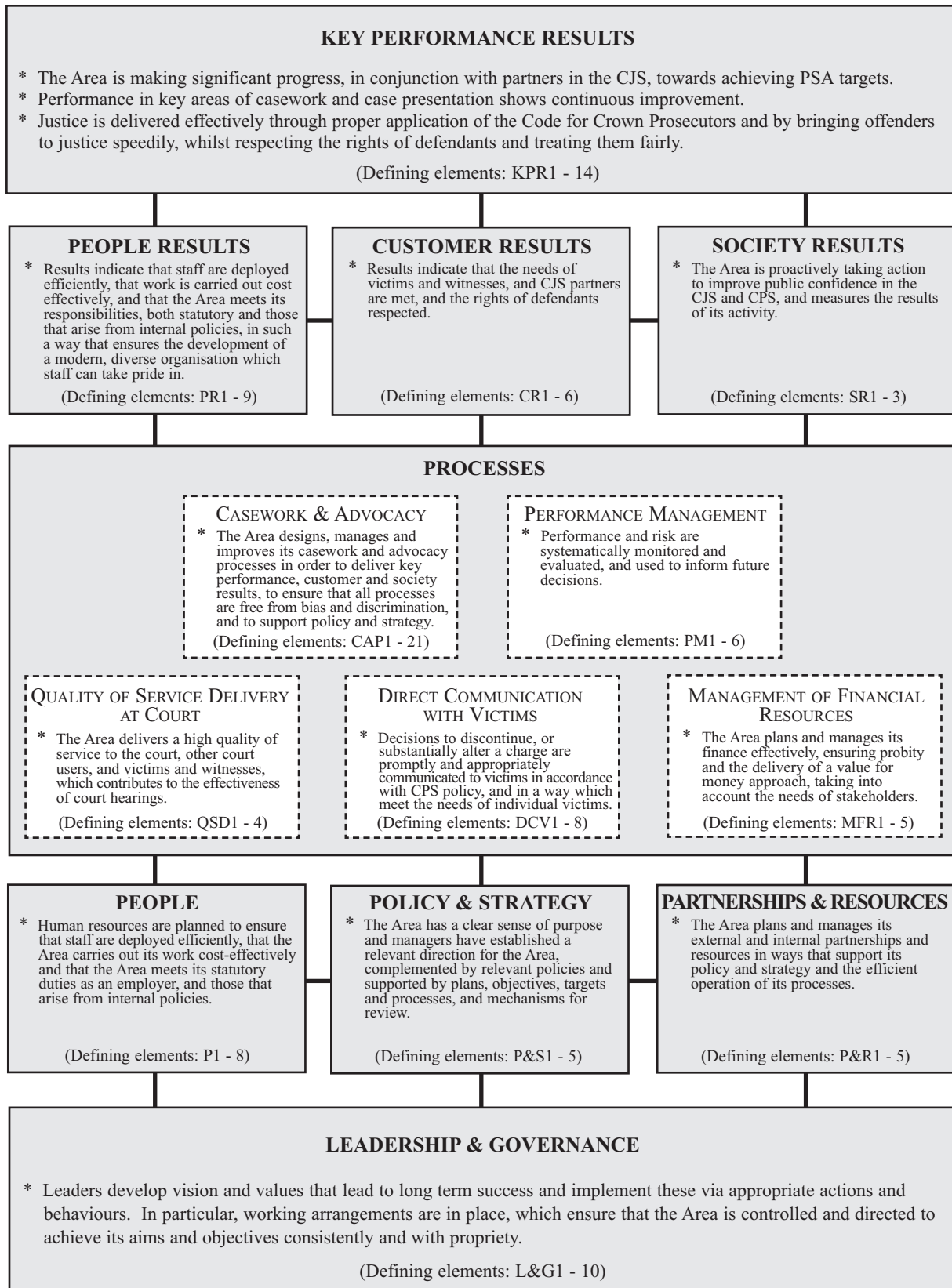
STANDARD: COMPLAINTS ARE EFFECTIVELY MANAGED TO MINIMISE THE RISK OF DISSATISFACTION AND TO ENSURE APPROPRIATE LESSONS ARE LEARNT.

- 11.28 The CCP and Unit Heads respond to complaints and MPs' letters. The responses we examined were generally well written and addressed the complaint appropriately. The Area responded to complaints and MPs' letters within time scales in every case between April and September 2002. The Unit Heads include details of complaints received in their quarterly performance report for discussion with the CCP and ABM. There may be scope to involve the VIB manager in analysis of complaints relating to the treatment of victims as a learning exercise.

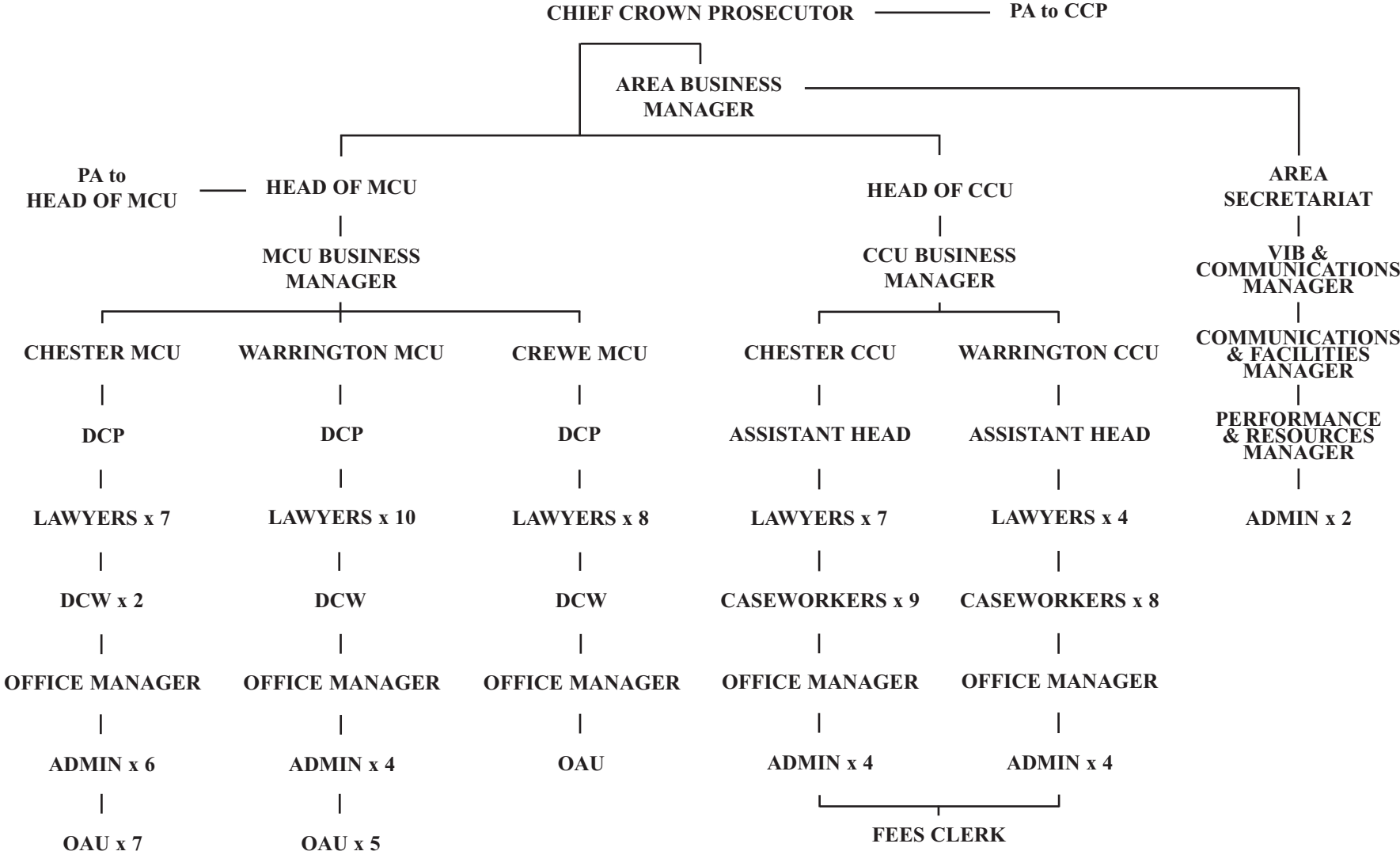
Strengths

- * Timely responses to complaints and MPs' letters.

BUSINESS EXCELLENCE MODEL INSPECTION MAP



CPS CHESHIRE STAFF STRUCTURE



ANNEX 3

Types of case - Magistrates' Court	CPS Cheshire		National	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Advice	586	2.7	52,748	3.8
Summary motoring	7,773	36.2	517,123	36.8
Summary non-motoring	3,733	17.4	263,225	18.7
Either way & indictable	9,172	42.7	561,153	40.0
Other proceedings	215	1.0	9,658	0.7
Total	21,479	100	1,403,907	100

Completed cases - Magistrates' Court	CPS Cheshire		National	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Hearings	16,036	77.6	969,390	72.3
Discontinuances	2,088	10.1	173,020	12.9
Committals	1,373	6.6	91,789	6.8
Other disposals	1,181	5.7	107,291	8.0
Total	20,678	100	1,341,490	100

Case results - Magistrates' Court	CPS Cheshire		National	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Guilty pleas	13,684	84.8	801,191	82.2
Proofs in absence	1,416	8.8	117,115	12.0
Convictions after trial	744	4.6	38,823	4.0
Acquittals: after trial	282	1.7	15,268	1.6
Acquittals: no case to answer	7	0.1	1,696	0.2
Total	16,133	100	974,093	100

Types of case - Crown Court	CPS Cheshire		National	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Indictable only	561	27.5	36,510	29.8
Either way: defence election	147	7.2	14,759	12.1
Either way: magistrates' direction	815	40.0	39,248	32.1
Summary: appeals; committals for sentence	517	25.3	31,906	26.1
Total	2,040	100	122,423	100

Completed cases - Crown Court	CPS Cheshire		National	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Trials (including guilty pleas)	1,384	90.9	74,340	82.1
Cases not proceeded with	99	6.5	12,911	14.3
Bind overs	13	0.9	1,383	1.5
Other disposals	27	1.7	1,882	2.1
Total	1,523	100	90,516	100

Case results - Crown Court	CPS Cheshire		National	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Guilty pleas	1,107	78.9	55,944	73.8
Convictions after trial	166	11.8	11,951	15.8
Jury acquittals	115	8.2	6,473	8.5
Judge directed acquittals	15	1.1	1,470	1.9
Total	1,403	100	75,838	100

TABLE OF RESOURCES AND CASELOADS

AREA CASELOAD/STAFFING CPS CHESHIRE		
	Dec 2002	Oct 2000
Number of lawyer SIP (excluding CCP)	41.2	30
Cases per lawyer (excluding CCP)	521.3	773.9
Magistrates' court contests per lawyer (excluding CCP)	24.9	39.3
Committals per lawyer (excluding CCP)	33.3	50
Crown Court trials per lawyer (excluding CCP)	6.8	11
Number of B1, B2 & B3 caseworkers in post (excluding ABM)	25	22.6
Committals per caseworker (B1, B2)	54.9	66.4
Crown Court trials per caseworker (B1, B2)	11.24	14.5
Non ring fenced running costs	£3,814,688 (end Sept 2002)	£2,911,600 (end April 2001)

**TOTAL NUMBER OF FILES EXAMINED FOR
CPS CHESHIRE**

	Number of files examined
File sample per CJU	
Cracked and ineffective trials	24
Domestic violence	19
Magistrates' court trials and guilty pleas	37
Race crime	16
File sample per TU	
Cases subject to custody time limits	15
Cracked and ineffective trials	20
Crown Court trials and guilty pleas	19
Domestic violence	1
Race crime	2
TOTAL	153

LIST OF LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE AGENCIES WHO ASSISTED IN OUR INSPECTION

Crown Court Judges

His Honour Judge Edwards, Honorary Recorder of Chester, Chester Crown Court
His Honour Judge Hale, Warrington Crown Court

District Judges (Magistrates' Courts)

District Judge Dodd, Warrington Magistrates' Court

Justices of the Peace (Chairs of PSDs/Benches)

Mrs H Agar JP
Mr J Pleeth JP
Miss C Baines JP
Mr R Squires JP
Mr R Baines JP

Justices' Chief Executive

Miss J Eeles

Clerk to the Justices

Mr S Walsh

Constabulary

Mr N Burgess, Chief Constable QPM
Mr G Gerrard, Assistant Chief Constable
Mr J Armstrong, Acting Detective Superintendent
Mr M Holland, Head of Administration of Police

National Probation Service

Mr S Collett, Chief Probation Officer

Youth Offending Teams

Mrs A Shepherd, Head of Youth Offending Services, Cheshire
Ms R Bradley, Head of Youth Offending Service, Halton & Warrington

Crown Court Managers

Mrs W Ferguson, Chester Crown Court
Mrs K Clough, Warrington Combined Court Centre

Victim Support

Mrs E Gaffney, Manager, Cheshire Victim Support, Crewe
Mrs P Goulden, Branch Manager, Cheshire Victim Support, Crewe
Mrs S Connolly, Senior Manager, Cheshire Victim Support, Crewe

Witness Service

Mr D May, Witness Service Manager, Chester Crown Court
Mrs V Baxter, Witness Service Manager, Warrington Crown Court
Mr D Johnson, Witness Service Manager, Knutsford Crown Court

Counsel

Mr S Everett
Mr T Teague QC
Mr R Trevor-Jones

Defence Solicitors

Mr S Bailey, Hibbert Durrad Moxon
Mr A Shaw, Walker, Smith and Way

Community Representatives

Ms S Janes, Racial Equality Council – Cheshire/Warrington & Hatton
Mr A Noor, Chair of Chester Asian Council

HMCPST VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

Vision

HMCPST's purpose is to promote continuous improvement in the efficiency, effectiveness and fairness of the prosecution services within a joined-up criminal justice system through a process of inspection and evaluation; the provision of advice; and the identification of good practice. In order to achieve this we want to be an organisation which:

- performs to the highest possible standards;
- inspires pride;
- commands respect;
- works in partnership with other criminal justice inspectorates and agencies but without compromising its robust independence;
- values all its staff; and
- seeks continuous improvement.

Mission

HMCPST strives to achieve excellence in all aspects of its activities and in particular to provide customers and stakeholders with consistent and professional inspection and evaluation processes together with advice and guidance, all measured against recognised quality standards and defined performance levels.

Values

We endeavour to be true to our values, as defined below, in all that we do:

consistency	Adopting the same principles and core procedures for each inspection, and apply the same standards and criteria to the evidence we collect.
thoroughness	Ensuring that our decisions and findings are based on information that has been thoroughly researched and verified, with an appropriate audit trail.
integrity	Demonstrating integrity in all that we do through the application of our other values.
professionalism	Demonstrating the highest standards of professional competence, courtesy and consideration in all our behaviours.
objectivity	Approaching every inspection with an open mind. We will not allow personal opinions to influence our findings. We will report things as we find them.

Taken together, these mean:

We demonstrate integrity, objectivity and professionalism at all times and in all aspects of our work and that our findings are based on information that has been thoroughly researched, verified and evaluated according to consistent standards and criteria.

GLOSSARY

ADVERSE CASE	A <i>NCTA</i> , <i>JOA</i> , <i>JDA</i> (see separate definitions) or one where magistrates decide there is insufficient evidence for an <i>either way</i> case to be committed to the Crown Court
AGENT	Solicitor or barrister not directly employed by the CPS who is instructed by them, usually on a sessional basis, to represent the prosecution in the magistrates' court
AREA BUSINESS MANAGER (ABM)	Senior business manager, not legally qualified, but responsible for finance, personnel, business planning and other operational matters
AREA CRIMINAL JUSTICE STRATEGY COMMITTEE (ACJSC)	A local forum for the heads of the criminal justice system agencies, including the resident judge, intended to oversee local initiatives at a senior level. In the course of being replaced by <i>Local Criminal Justice Boards</i>
AREA MANAGEMENT TEAM (AMT)	The senior legal and non-legal managers of an Area
ASPECT FOR IMPROVEMENT	A significant weakness relevant to an important aspect of performance (sometimes including the steps necessary to address this)
CATS - COMPASS, SCOPE, SYSTEM 36	IT systems for case tracking used by the CPS. Compass is the new comprehensive system in the course of being rolled out to all Areas
CASEWORKER	A member of CPS staff who deals with, or manages, day-to-day conduct of a prosecution case under the supervision of a Crown Prosecutor and, in the Crown Court, attends court to assist the advocate
CHIEF CROWN PROSECUTOR (CCP)	One of 42 chief officers heading the local CPS in each Area, is a barrister or solicitor. Has a degree of autonomy but is accountable to Director of Public Prosecutions for the performance of the Area
CODE FOR CROWN PROSECUTORS (THE CODE)	The public document that sets out the framework for prosecution decision-making. Crown Prosecutors have the DPP's power to determine cases delegated, but must exercise them in accordance with the Code and its two tests – the evidential test and the public interest test. Cases should only proceed if, firstly, there is sufficient evidence to provide a realistic prospect of conviction and, secondly, if the prosecution is required in the public interest
CO-LOCATION	CPS and police staff working together in a single operational unit (<i>TU</i> or <i>CJU</i>), whether in CPS or police premises – one of the recommendations of the <i>Glidewell</i> report

COMMITTAL	Procedure whereby a defendant in an <i>either way</i> case is moved from the magistrates' court to the Crown Court for trial, usually upon service of the prosecution evidence on the defence, but occasionally after consideration of the evidence by the magistrates
COURT SESSION	There are two sessions each day in the magistrates' court, morning and afternoon
CRACKED TRIAL	A case listed for a contested trial which does not proceed, either because the defendant changes his plea to guilty, or pleads to an alternative charge, or the prosecution offer no evidence
CRIMINAL JUSTICE UNIT (CJU)	Operational unit of the CPS that handles the preparation and presentation of magistrates' court prosecutions. The <i>Glidewell</i> report recommended that police and CPS staff should be located together and work closely to gain efficiency and higher standards of communication and case preparation. (In some Areas the police administration support unit is called a CJU)
CUSTODY TIME LIMITS (CTLs)	The statutory time limit for keeping a defendant in custody awaiting trial. May be extended by the court in certain circumstances
DESIGNATED CASEWORKER (DCW)	A senior <i>caseworker</i> who is trained to present straightforward cases on pleas of guilty, or to prove them where the defendant does not attend the magistrates' court
DIRECT COMMUNICATION WITH VICTIMS (DCV)	A new procedure whereby CPS consults directly with victims of crime and provides them with information about the progress of their case
DISCLOSURE, Primary and Secondary	The prosecution has a duty to disclose to the defence material gathered during the investigation of a criminal offence, which is not intended to be used as evidence against the defendant, but which may be relevant to an issue in the case. Primary disclosure is given where an item may undermine the prosecution case; secondary is given where, after service of a defence statement, any item may assist that defence
DISCONTINUANCE	The dropping of a case by the CPS in the magistrates' court, whether by written notice, withdrawal, or offer of no evidence at court
EARLY ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING (EAH)	Under <i>Narey</i> procedures, one of the two classes into which all summary and <i>either way</i> cases are divided. EAHs are for cases where a not guilty plea is anticipated
EARLY FIRST HEARING (EFH)	Under <i>Narey</i> one of the two classes into which all summary and <i>either way</i> cases are divided. EFHs are for straightforward cases where a guilty plea is anticipated
EITHER WAY OFFENCES	Those triable in either the magistrates' court or the Crown Court, e.g. theft
EUROPEAN FOUNDATION FOR QUALITY MODEL (EFQM)	A framework for continuous self-assessment and self-improvement against whose criteria HMCSI conducts its inspections

EVIDENTIAL TEST	The initial test under <i>the Code</i> – is there sufficient evidence to provide a realistic prospect of conviction on the evidence?
GLIDEWELL	A far-reaching review of CPS operations and policy dating from 1998 which made important restructuring recommendations e.g. the split into 42 local Areas and the further split into functional units - <i>CJUs</i> and <i>TUs</i>
GOOD PRACTICE	An aspect of performance upon which the Inspectorate not only comments favourably, but considers that it reflects in manner of handling work developed by an Area which, with appropriate adaptations to local needs, might warrant being commended as national practice
HIGHER COURT ADVOCATE (HCA)	In this context, a lawyer employed by the CPS who has a right of audience in the Crown Court
JOINT PERFORMANCE MONITORING (JPM)	A management system which collects and analyses information about aspects of activity undertaken by the police and/or the CPS, aimed at securing improvements in performance
INDICTABLE ONLY OFFENCES	Offences triable only in the Crown Court, e.g. murder, rape, robbery
INEFFECTIVE TRIAL	A case listed for a contested trial that is unable to proceed when it was scheduled to start, for a variety of possible reasons, and is adjourned to a later date
JUDGE DIRECTED ACQUITTAL (JDA)	Where the judge directs a jury to find a defendant not guilty after the trial has started
JUDGE ORDERED ACQUITTAL (JOA)	Where the judge dismisses a case as a result of the prosecution offering no evidence before a jury is empanelled
LEVEL A, B, C, D, E STAFF	CPS grades below the Senior Civil Service, from A (administrative staff) to E (senior lawyers or administrators)
LOCAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE BOARD	The Chief Officers of police, probation, the courts, the CPS and the Youth Offending Team in each criminal justice area who are accountable to the National Criminal Justice Board for the delivery of <i>PSA</i> targets
MG6C, MG6D ETC	Forms completed by police relating to unused material
NAREY courts, reviews etc	A reformed procedure for handling cases in the magistrates' court, designed to produce greater speed and efficiency
NO CASE TO ANSWER (NCTA)	Where magistrates dismiss a case at the close of the prosecution evidence because they do not consider that the prosecution have made out a case for the defendant to answer
PERSISTENT YOUNG OFFENDER	A youth previously sentenced on at least three occasions
PRE-TRIAL REVIEW	A hearing in the magistrates' court designed to define the issues for trial and deal with any other outstanding pre-trial issues

PUBLIC INTEREST TEST	The second test under <i>the Code</i> - is it in the public interest to prosecute this defendant on this charge?
PUBLIC SERVICE AGREEMENT (PSA) TARGETS	Targets set by the Government for the criminal justice system (CJS), relating to bringing offenders to justice and raising public confidence in the CJS
RECOMMENDATION	This is normally directed towards an individual or body and sets out steps necessary to address a significant weakness relevant to an important aspect of performance (i.e. an aspect for improvement) that, in the view of the Inspectorate, should attract highest priority
REVIEW , initial, continuing, summary trial etc	The process whereby a Crown Prosecutor determines that a case received from the police satisfies and continues to satisfy the legal tests for prosecution in the Code. One of the most important functions of the CPS
SECTION 9 CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT 1967	A procedure for serving statements of witnesses so that the evidence can be read, rather than the witness attend in person
SECTION 51 CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998	A procedure for fast-tracking <i>indictable only</i> cases to the Crown Court, which now deals with such cases from a very early stage – the defendant is sent to the Crown Court by the magistrates
SENSITIVE MATERIAL	Any relevant material in a police investigative file not forming part of the case against the defendant, the <i>disclosure</i> of which may not be in the public interest
SPECIFIED PROCEEDINGS	Minor offences which are dealt with by the police and the magistrates' court and do not require review or prosecution by the CPS, unless a not guilty plea is entered
STRENGTHS	Work done consistently to a proper, professional standard
SUMMARY OFFENCES	Those triable only in the magistrates' courts, e.g. most motoring offences
TQ1	A monitoring form on which both the police and the CPS assess the timeliness and quality of the police file as part of <i>joint performance monitoring</i>
TRIAL UNIT (TU)	Operational unit of the CPS which prepares cases for the Crown Court