

Our commitment to you

In CPS West Mercia, we appreciate how important it is for our communities to feel safe and know that crime is being tackled effectively. We share that aim and are working tirelessly to give you that assurance.



I am proud of what we have achieved this past year, not only increasing our impressive conviction rate but also successfully rising to meet new challenges.

In July 2005, we were one of the first non-priority areas nationally, to introduce a scheme where our prosecutors decide on criminal charges, and secure the best possible chance of prosecution.

One of our most significant achievements was the introduction of witness care units to support victims and witnesses through the prosecution process. This move to a more tailored service is an important step forward in helping people deal with the effects of crime.

I have touched on just a few of our achievements and this report contains much more information which I hope will inspire you to want to know more about your local CPS.

Jim England
Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS West Mercia
Artillery House, Heritage Way,
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Domestic safety for you

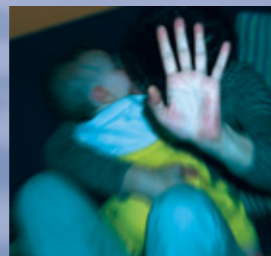
1 in 4 women will experience domestic violence at some time in their lives.

2 women are killed every week by a current or former partner.

Violence against women and children is a crime —

Domestic violence
Rape and sexual assaults
Forced marriage
Honour crimes
Child abuse
Elder abuse
Human trafficking
Prostitution
Female genital mutilation

Freephone 24-hour National Domestic Violence Helpline: 0808 2000 247
Perpetrators' phonenumber RESPECT: 0845 122 8609



Prosecuting hate crime for you

We regard a racist or religiously-motivated incident as:

Any incident which is perceived to be racist or religiously motivated by the victim or any other person.

An offence is racially or religiously aggravated if:

- at the time of committing the offence, or immediately before or after doing so, the offender demonstrates towards the victim of the offence hostility based on the victim's membership (or presumed membership) of a racial or religious group; or
- the offence is motivated (wholly or partly) by hostility towards members of a racial or religious group based on their membership of that group.

Certain offences, including assault, harassment, criminal damage and public order offences, can be prosecuted specifically as racially or religiously-aggravated offences.

With any other offence where there is evidence of racial or religious aggravation, the defendant faces a harsher sentence than if he or she were found guilty of a non-racial or religious crime.

Helping you to feel safe



We regard a homophobic incident as:

Any incident which is perceived to be homophobic or transphobic by the victim or by any other person [including the perpetrator].

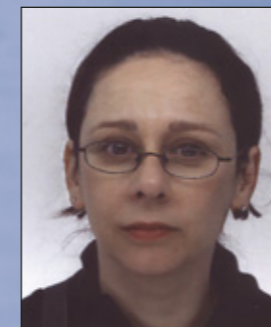
We regard homophobic crimes as particularly serious because they undermine people's right to feel safe about, and be safe in, their sexual orientation.

Such crimes are based on prejudice, discrimination and hate, and they have no place in an open and democratic society.

We regard the homophobic element of any crime as a serious aggravating feature. We are determined to play our part in reducing crime by bringing offenders to justice.

In West Mercia, we have specially trained prosecutors who are dedicated to securing justice for the victims of domestic violence, race and religiously aggravated crime and homophobic offences. These "champions" of hate crime are also involved in working with communities to raise confidence so that victims feel able to report crime.

Right: Homophobic Crime Champion Kerry Clay.



Area information

CPS West Mercia provides a prosecution service for the people of Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Shropshire.

The Area, of just over 140 staff, is led by the Chief Crown Prosecutor Jim England who is supported by the Area Business Manager Laurence Sutton.

The Worcestershire North Team, managed by Charles Hardy, and the Worcestershire South/Herefordshire Team, managed by David Elliott, are both based in our Droitwich office, tel: 01905 825000. The Shropshire team is managed by Claire Riley and based in Shrewsbury, tel: 01743 263700

We also have staff based in Hereford and in police stations throughout the three counties.



The Crown Prosecution Service in West Mercia and

YOU

...working with our community



Photo: Rob Munslow



What the CPS does for you

The Crown Prosecution Service was set up in 1986 to prosecute criminal cases investigated by the police in England and Wales. In undertaking this role, the CPS:

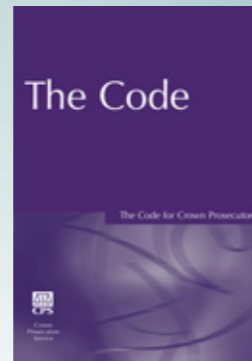
- advises the police on cases for possible prosecution
- reviews cases submitted by the police for prosecution
- where the decision is to prosecute, determines the charge in all but minor cases
- prepares cases for court; and
- presents those cases at court

Each year we handle around 39,700 magistrates' court cases and over 2,300 Crown Court cases. In 2005-06, our average conviction rate was 97% in the magistrates' court and 94% in the Crown Court.

In the past year we achieved a 15% increase in the number of offenders we brought to justice and our achievement in reducing ineffective Crown Court trials was significantly better than the national average. We also gained orders to recoup funds and assets gained through crime, amounting to £2.3 million.

Justice for you

The Code for Crown Prosecutors is a public document, issued by the Director of Public Prosecutions that sets out the general principles Crown Prosecutors should follow when they make decisions on cases.



Is there enough evidence against the defendant?

When deciding whether there is enough evidence to prosecute, Crown Prosecutors must consider whether evidence can be used in court and is reliable. Crown Prosecutors must be satisfied there is enough evidence to provide a "realistic prospect of conviction" against each defendant.

Is it in the public interest for the CPS to bring the case to court?

A prosecution will usually take place unless the public interest factors against prosecution clearly outweigh those in favour of prosecution.

Keeping you informed

No Witness No Justice

At the heart of No Witness No Justice are the Witness Care Units, which now provide an enhanced level of service to all victims and witnesses in England and Wales in cases where a charge has been brought. This includes completing needs assessments, to identify childcare or accessibility issues for example, and organising pre-court familiarisation visits.

Victims' Code

The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime came into full effect on 3 April 2006.

The Code of Practice will give victims rights to minimum standards of service from the criminal justice system for the first time. This includes notifying vulnerable or intimidated victims within one working day if there is insufficient evidence to charge a defendant, and within five working days for all other victims, as well as identifying any special measures that may be appropriate.

The CPS is committed to its obligations under the Code, which formalises many of the good things it is already doing.

Supporting you



We are keen to be involved with our communities and have a comprehensive plan of activities to bring us nearer to the people we serve.

Many of our activities revolve around supporting young people through the learning

process, ranging from advisory talks to "mock trials" where students can take part and gain first hand "experience" of the criminal justice system (CJS).

As part of our commitment to reducing the fear of crime, we also work to raise public awareness of what we do, for example Max Bennett, one of only 14 anti-social behaviour specialists in the country, regularly shares his knowledge and addresses public meetings on the topic.

In the past year we have forged relationships with representatives from the gypsy and traveller and black and minority ethnic communities to look at the issues they face and this is one of the main areas we intend to build on in the coming year.

Working for you

We employ a highly skilled team of people to provide you with a professional prosecution service. We are committed to the development of our staff and have achieved the Investors in People standard.

We also provide opportunities for staff to become legally qualified via our Law Scholarship and Legal Trainee schemes.

Our prosecutors, undertake at least 16 hours professional development each year and receive training in all new legislation. This year many have acquired Higher Court Advocacy (HCA) rights enabling them to be advocates in Crown Court.

Peter Tooke, a HCA prosecutor experienced in the most serious crimes, has endorsed this development saying "Being able to follow a case from beginning to conclusion can only bring benefits to the prosecution process and the support given to victims"

Our dedicated caseworkers (DCW) now have extra powers and can prosecute a wider range of cases in the magistrates court, resulting in their number increasing from three to 10.

Of course none of our legal staff could undertake their tasks without our support team. Made up of caseworkers and managers they are the people who prepare cases and make sure they are ready for court. It is a skilled job involving computer skills, a lot of organisation and good liaison work with the police and courts.

Working together for you

CPS West Mercia is one of the criminal justice agencies represented on the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB). The aim of the board is to bring the agencies together to adopt a "joined up" approach to delivering justice in the Area and increasing public confidence in the criminal justice system (CJS).

The other agencies include:

- police
- courts
- prison and youth offending services
- probation service

Two initiatives stand out as important examples of the benefits of partnership working for 2005-2006. These are the Statutory Charging Scheme and the introduction of Witness Care Units. Both involve us working with the police to improve the level of service to the public.

Under the Statutory Charging Scheme our prosecutors help the police obtain the best evidence and bring the right charge by giving them advice from the beginning of a case. This good practice is complemented by the work of witness care officers, CPS and police staff, who are a vital source of support for victims and witnesses, keeping them informed and meeting their needs.

This level of support is a major development and one which helps people deal with what can otherwise seem a daunting prospect of attending court.