



CPS

**Crown Prosecution Service
response to HMCPSI Area Assurance
Inspection of CPS Cymru-Wales**

17 August 2016

CPS Response to HMCPsi Area Assurance Inspection of CPS Cymru-Wales

17/08/2016

Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPsi) has today issued a report [17 August 2016] following its inspection of the performance of CPS Cymru-Wales. The Area was assessed in relation to the Governance and the Value for Money that it provides to the public, and was rated as 'Good'. In relation to its Casework Quality and its standard of delivery for victims, witnesses and other service users, the Area was rated as 'Fair'.

We are pleased to note the Inspectorate's findings that CPS Cymru-Wales is a well-governed and effectively led Area, with an appropriate performance monitoring system in place. Conviction rates are above the national average (including in relation to Hate Crime and Domestic Abuse), whilst the cost-per-case in Wales is the lowest in the country.

We are also pleased to note that the Inspectorate's findings in relation to case preparation and progression are consistent with our own internal analysis, which shows that CPS Cymru-Wales is a high performing Area in this regard.

We welcome the Inspectorate's acknowledgement that there is a common identity between the Welsh criminal justice agencies and a desire to work together to drive improvement. Examples of good partnership working are provided in the report and we will continue to work together to improve performance, embedding Better Case Management in the Crown Court and Transforming Summary Justice in the Magistrates' Courts. We will continue to work with the police to improve the quality of police files and casework in the Rape and Serious Sexual Offences Unit.

The Inspectorate's comments in relation to correspondence with victims align with our own findings in an earlier internal review. We will continue to address these issues to further improve the quality of our communications and service to victims.

Four of the eight issues identified by the Inspectorate (detailed below) relate to the quality of the file provided to the CPS. Whilst file quality is ultimately the responsibility of the police, we will continue to work in partnership with them, providing constructive feedback and guidance on the evidence required for a successful prosecution.

Inspectorate's Issues to Address

There are eight issues to address. The CPS provides its responses below and will work continue to work to deliver these recommendations:-

1. The Area must ensure that it challenges the police for their failure to have effective police supervision and gatekeeping arrangements of rape and serious sexual offences cases.
CPS Response: We will continue to work with the police and set out our expectations of the standard of file which we expect in these sensitive and serious cases. We will ensure that compliance with these expectations is monitored in the National File Quality Monitoring Scheme which is to be implemented across Wales in October.

2. The Area must require the police to comply with their obligations for all aspects of the disclosure process, specifically with regard the provision of adequate descriptions on unused material schedules.

CPS Response: We will continue to work with our police partners and re-iterate their obligations to ensure that they provide adequate descriptions on unused material schedules. We will provide further guidance to our prosecutors in relation to the completion of Disclosure Record Sheets.

3. The Area must continue to work with (and challenge where necessary) the police to improve file quality.

CPS Response: We will re-iterate clear standards and expectations, enabling prosecutors to robustly and constructively challenge police file quality, and monitor compliance with the Director's Guidance on Charging and National File Standard.

4. The Area must improve the quality of prosecutors' file reviews.

CPS Response: We will re-iterate our standards and expectations of what constitutes an 'excellent' file review. The application of these standards will be incorporated into prosecutors' personal objectives and monitored on an individual basis.

5. The Area needs to improve its case preparation work for the first hearing and comply fully with the requirements of 'Transforming Summary Justice'.

CPS Response: The Area has delivered strong performance in the Magistrates' Court achieving over 77% of guilty pleas at first hearing for the quarter ending March 2016, which was the best CPS performance in England and Wales. Similarly the Area achieved conviction rates of over 86% for the same period representing one of the strongest performances nationally. As part of its continuous improvement strategy, the Area will undertake an assessment of current practice to ensure continued strong performance and to identify opportunities for further improvement.

6. The Area's performance in rape and serious sexual offence work is a concern. The Area must focus on this and work with (and challenge if necessary) the police to ensure that it is dealt with appropriately.

CPS Response: In addition to working with police partners to improve file quality, we will undertake monthly reviews to identify where further improvements can be made.

7. The Area must improve its performance in relation to compliance with all relevant policies and Codes that relate to victim communication.

CPS Response: The Inspectorate's findings align with those of our own from an earlier internal review. The Area has developed a detailed plan to improve performance. Delivery against this plan will be monitored by the Area's Senior Management Team.

8. The Area must ensure that the appropriate quality standards are achieved in all communications with victims.

CPS Response: Following its own internal review, the Area has implemented a new quality assurance monitoring scheme by managers. This has been formalised within an "Expectations Document" that sets clear objectives for all staff in relation to the timeliness and quality of communications.