



What we do at the CPS

At the CPS we prosecute people who commit criminal offences.

In more serious cases, we decide whether a suspect can be charged with an offence and if so - what offences they should be charged with.

In less serious cases, the police can decide whether or not to charge someone. If they charge someone with a criminal offence then we'll review the evidence to make sure that the case meets our legal test before it goes to court.

If someone is charged with a criminal offence we'll present the evidence against them at court.

‘It’s our job to make sure the right person is prosecuted for the right offence.’





The process of a criminal case

The investigation

The police or another investigatory body like HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) will investigate and gather evidence.

The charge

The police or the CPS will review the evidence and decide whether any suspects can be charged. We'll do this by using our two-stage legal test - the Code for Crown Prosecutors.

The plea

If a suspect is charged with a criminal offence they will go to court and plead guilty or not guilty. If they plead guilty they'll be sentenced. If they plead not guilty there will be a trial.

The trial

At a trial the CPS will present the evidence against the defendant. A defence lawyer will test the prosecution evidence by cross-examination and will put forward the defendant's version of events. The magistrates or District Judge (in a magistrates court) or the jury (in the Crown Court) will then decide if the defendant is guilty or not guilty. To find them guilty they need to be sure that the defendant committed the offence.

The sentencing

If a defendant is found guilty they will be sentenced by the magistrates or a District Judge (in a magistrates court) or by the Crown Court judge (in the Crown Court). They'll do this in line with the Sentencing Guidelines which they are required to follow.