

# CROWN PROSECUTION SERVICE PRESS RELEASE



18 March 2009

117/09

## CPS UPDATES ITS RAPE AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE POLICIES

Revised public policies on the way the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) handles cases of rape and domestic violence aim to give greater clarity to those who support victims, and provide consistency for prosecutors.

The policies follow a public consultation and focus groups with organisations, criminal justice agencies and individuals. They are aimed at those who support victims of rape and domestic violence, professionally or personally.

Director of Public Prosecutions, Keir Starmer QC, said: "Prosecutors are under a constant duty to keep up with the law and social attitudes. This is especially so when handling cases of rape and domestic violence, which present us with many issues to be aware of when dealing with victims. The feedback from the consultation has been invaluable and we will continue to work to improve the service we offer."

The Solicitor General, Vera Baird QC, said: "We are determined to tackle rape and domestic violence effectively with the help of the voluntary sector.

"There have been significant improvements in the prosecutions of these crimes. The revised CPS policies will ensure that all today's prosecutors are up to date on the law, policies and procedures that have been put in place to protect the needs of vulnerable victims and bring perpetrators to justice."

The CPS policy statement on prosecuting cases of rape was first published in 2004. This second edition includes the many changes in law, practice and procedure since then. These include:

- the implementation of section 27 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1998, which makes admissible the video recorded evidence of adult victims of rape and serious sexual offences in the Crown Court;
- the new statutory regime relating to the admissibility of hearsay and bad character evidence under the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 2003.

Following the consultation responses the CPS has worked to improve the readability of the policy and other revisions include:

- improving the section on rape myths and stereotypes;
- making the language simpler and more accessible for the reader;

- adding a glossary of legal terms;
- updating the details of external agencies; and
- clarifying the section on sentencing.

The CPS first issued a policy on domestic violence in 2001. This current refresh is the third edition. Changes to the policy include:

- the roll-out of statutory charging (the CPS now makes the decision to charge in all but minor cases);
- the training of CPS staff on domestic violence;
- the implementation of new special measures for victims and witnesses;
- the roll-out of specialist domestic violence courts (SDVCs), Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs), and multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs);
- the publication of the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime and the Prosecutors' Pledge; and
- the introduction of Witness Care Units.

Between 2006-7 and 2007-8, rape convictions increased from 55 to 58 per cent while the number of cases prosecuted rose from 1,963 to 2,220. Over the same period, domestic violence convictions rose from 65 to 69 per cent and the number of cases prosecuted rose from 36,957 to 47,115. By December 2008 the success rate for rape prosecutions had risen again to 59% and for domestic violence to 72.5%.

- Ends -

#### NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. Media enquiries to Russell Hayes, CPS Press Office 020 7710 6088 or [russell.hayes@cps.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:russell.hayes@cps.gsi.gov.uk). The out of hours pager is 07699 781926.
2. The policies and consultation responses are available on the CPS website at:
3. A Frequently Asked Questions leaflet has also been produced on Domestic Violence:
4. The CPS 'Violence Against Women Crime Report 2007-2008' is available on the CPS website at: [http://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/docs/CPS\\_VAW\\_report\\_2008.pdf](http://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/docs/CPS_VAW_report_2008.pdf)
5. The Home Secretary recently launched the largest-ever cross-Government public consultation to tackle violence against women and girls. *The Together We Can End Violence Against Women And Girls* Strategy consultation sets out action Government has taken to tackle all forms of violence against women and girls and looks at what more

can be done to challenge the attitudes that may uphold it in order to help women and girls feel safer. To view the consultation go to [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/keepwomensafe](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/keepwomensafe)

6. The Crown Prosecution Service is the independent authority responsible for prosecuting criminal cases investigated by the police in England and Wales. It is responsible for:
  - Advising the police and reviewing the evidence on cases for possible prosecution
  - Deciding the charge where the decision is to prosecute
  - Preparing cases for court
  - Presenting cases at court
7. The CPS consists of 42 Areas in total, each headed by a Chief Crown Prosecutor (CCP). In addition there are four specialised national divisions: Organised Crime, Special Crime, Counter-Terrorism and the Fraud Prosecution Service. A telephone service, CPS Direct, provides out-of-hours advice and decisions to police officers across England and Wales. The CPS employs around 8,400 people and prosecuted 1,091,250 cases with an overall conviction rate of 85.1% in 2007-2008. Further information can be found on our website: [www.cps.gov.uk](http://www.cps.gov.uk)
8. The CPS, together with ACPO and media representatives, has developed a Protocol for the release of prosecution material to the media. This sets out the type of prosecution material that will normally be released, or considered for release, together with the factors we will take into account when considering requests. The Protocol is published on our website at:

<http://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/agencies/mediaprotocol.html>

