



Crown Prosecution Service

Audit Report

April 2025

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Executive Summary

The Civil Service Commission audits organisations to drive greater innovation and improvement in departmental practice, while ensuring the important principle of recruitment on merit, after fair and open competition remains the cornerstone of an effective and impartial Civil Service.

The new audit programme better reflects the differences in scale and the challenge of recruitment within the different departments and organisations that the CSC regulates.

For each audit the Commission requests evidence on six campaigns, with each to include records related to:

- o the job advert;
- o the candidate pack;
- o the sift records (with scores);
- o the interview questions;
- o the interview scores (with feedback);
- o the appointment; and
- o the chair / panel report.

and:

- requests evidence on six exceptions;
- issues a questionnaire related to diversity, innovation and SCS recruitment;
- identifies areas of concern; potential breaches to the Recruitment Principles; and clarifying evidence from the organisation required for the interim audit;
- discusses the above with each organisation at an audit meeting;
- moderates the final report with Civil Service Commissioners including, where relevant, the department's Link Commissioner;
- issues the Final Audit Report with the audit rating to the organisation; and
- follows up recommendations with the organisation to ensure the actions have been addressed.

Profile

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) is a non-ministerial department responsible for prosecuting criminal cases investigated by the police and other investigative authorities, in England and Wales.

- **Headcount:** 7,575 (December 2024)
- **Appointments:** 613 (last four quarters)
- **Exceptions:** 18 (last four quarters)
- **SCS1+2 / Commissioner-led competitions:** 12/1 (last four quarters)

The CPS audit was in December 2024.

The CPS Complexity Score is 2. This reflects a small department with a low range and public profile. CPS made the case to increase their score to 3 due to the sensitive and public nature of their work being in the public eye on a daily basis. CPS engaged positively throughout the audit process.

Audit Findings

The audit reviewed six campaigns and six exceptions.

Good Practice

CPS provides clear guidance on what the personal statement should include.

CPS ensures the candidate pack mirrors the information found within the job advert, clearly using headings and sub-headings to signpost candidates to the relevant information.

Areas for Improvement

CPS should take steps to improve structure and accuracy on job adverts to ensure candidates are provided with greater clarity on the application processes, and reduce errors, such as broken links and drafting mistakes.

CPS should clearly set out if and how CVs will be assessed and how desirable criteria will be used.

CPS should ensure interview records provide candidate outcomes to ensure both consistency and transparency.

Queries Raised

CSC queried why candidates who are shortlisted for interview for the Individual Leadership Assessment (ILA) would be contacted separately by the Cabinet Office who would provide candidates with further information. CPS responded that they were required to conduct a Staff Engagement Exercise with Gatenby Sanderson via the Cabinet Office. CPS now works with Gatenby Sanderson directly, with the Cabinet Office removed from the process.

Breaches of the Recruitment Principles

Three Technical breaches were identified in the audit. One Technical breach was for omitting the complaints process from the job advert. Two Technical breaches related to not assessing candidates on advertised behaviours.

Two Technical breaches were identified outside the audit, both relating to advertised criteria not being assessed.

Exceptions

The audit reviewed the following six exceptions:

- **Exception 1:** G7 former civil servant (Exception 5) for 6 months.
- **Exception 2:** AO temporary appointment (Exception 1) for 14 months.
- **Exception 3:** G7 temporary appointment (Exception 1) for 6 months.

- **Exception 4:** G7 temporary appointment (Exception 1) for 6 months.
- **Exception 5:** G7 temporary appointment (Exception 1) for 6 months.
- **Exception 6:** AO conversion to permanency (Exception 10).

Exception 1 usage

- **Total (last four quarters):** 7

CPS made seven Exception 1 appointments. Four were audited and evidenced as being used in line with its intended purpose.

Diversity, Innovation and SCS Recruitment

Diversity

CPS shares diverse employee experiences as videos to promote their campaigns on LinkedIn and Instagram. CPS also provides Welsh language examples for roles in Wales.

CPS promotes diversity-related accolades in job adverts and on social media, including Disability Confident Leader, Level 2 Carer Confident, Top 10 Employers for Working Families 2024 and Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers.

CPS proactively uses life chance schemes including its own Access to Law life chance opportunity. This is a Paralegal Apprenticeship which runs in Merseyside and Manchester for lower socioeconomic candidates. CPS has a separate Solicitor Apprenticeship aimed at the same group of candidates.

CPS has launched a new leadership coaching initiative for colleagues from black and ethnic minority backgrounds to support access to opportunities for colleagues with the aim of ensuring that diverse representation runs throughout the organisation.

Innovation

CPS has broadened their job promotions to Indeed, Glassdoor, Instagram, findajob.dwp.gov.uk, and the Student Room.

SCS Recruitment (including External by Default)

The total number of SCS recruitment within the department conducted via fair and open, based on merit, in the last four quarters was 12. One appointment was made to an external candidate.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Three Technical breaches inside the audit. Two Technical breaches outside the audit.

Seven Exception 1 appointments with four audited for their intended purpose.

CPS takes a proactive approach to diversity when recruiting, with the use of employee experiences, social media and coaching.

12 SCS recruited through a fair and open process, with one external candidate appointed.

Management Action Plan

The audit identified three recommendations:

	Recommendations	Priority	Implementation Date
1	CPS should take steps to improve structure and accuracy on job adverts, in particular including the complaints process; accessible links, and proof reading to avoid errors.		October 2025
2	CPS should ensure candidates are not assessed on behaviours / criteria that were not advertised.		October 2025
3	CPS should take steps to improve record keeping across all campaigns to ensure candidates outcomes are recorded		October 2025

The Civil Service Commission will follow up with the organisation to ensure actions have been taken to address the recommendations.

Moderation Meeting

At the Moderation Meeting, held on 12 March 2025, the Commissioners agreed that the CPS complexity score should be increased to 3 in recognition of its size and the need to recruit a large number of senior legal progressionals. The recommendations and audit rating were agreed, subject to a change in the complexity score.

Audit Rating

The audit rating is determined by compliance (breaches and Exception 1 usage); positive actions (diversity and innovation) and SCS recruitment (including external by default and Commissioner insight). The weighting will also be determined by the department size – for example, larger departments will have more SCS staff than smaller departments who may not have any SCS staff.

	Breaches	Exception 1 Usage	Diversity	Innovation	SCS Recruitment
Scale: 1-5	2	4	5	1	4
Weight (100%)	40%	25%	10%	10%	15%
Sub Score	16	20	10	2	12
Total Score	60				
Rating	FAIR				

Our Classification Systems

Complexity Score

- 5** **Most Complex** – largest most varied or currently most high-profile departments
- 4** **Complex** – large, varied or a high-profile department
- 3** **Average Complexity** – small, more focused departments, medium range and public profile
- 2** **Less Complex** – small department, low range and public profile
- 1** **Least Complex** – smallest departments with a focused remit

Considerations Informing Audit Rating

Compliance, Breaches, Exception 1 Usage, Diversity, Innovation, and SCS Recruitment.

Audit Ratings

Good	70-100
Fair	50-69
Needs Improvement	30-49
Needs Regulatory Intervention	20-29

Recommendations

Priority	Definition	Action Required
High	Non-compliance with the Recruitment Principles.	Remedial action must be taken taken urgently within an agreed timescale.
Medium	Impact on the legal requirement of the Recruitment Principles related to fair, open, and based on merit.	Remedial action should be prioritised within an agreed timetable.
Low	No, or minimal, impact on the legal Requirement of the Recruitment Principles related to fair, open, and based on merit.	Remedial action should be taken at earliest opportunity within an agreed timetable.