

**Can you help the Crown Prosecution Service serve the communities of the North East?**

**What is the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)?**

The CPS is the principal prosecuting authority for England and Wales. In the most serious and complex cases the CPS will advise the police from an early stage in an investigation. The police are responsible for investigating criminal offences. In many cases once the investigation is complete the police refer the case to the CPS and it is the CPS which decides whether there is sufficient evidence to charge a suspect with an offence, and which offences to charge. The CPS is then responsible for prosecuting cases in court.

**What is a Community Involvement Panel?**

Community Involvement Panels are a key method of engaging with the communities we serve. It is important that the CPS, as a public service, engages with communities to ensure that we take into account community concerns and priorities in our decision-making, and to develop trust and confidence in our communities. The overarching aims of our Community Involvement Panels are:

* To assist CPS North East to ensure effective community engagement and compliance with the Equality Act 2010
* To ensure that CPS North East involves and considers the views of all our communities to identify local concerns
* To consult with communities on strategies, plans and policies to inform and improve policy, casework, employment and training

**What is the format of CPS North East Community Involvement Panels?**

CPS North East has one Community Involvement Panel for each of the three police force Areas it covers: Cleveland, Durham and Northumbria. The three Panels meet together on the same day three times a year. During the course of that day, some time is spent all together discussing Area-wide issues, and some time is spent separately in the individual Panels discussing local issues.

There is also a sub group of the Joint Community Involvement Panels which looks at one Disability Hate Crime file at each meeting, to identify areas of good practice and areas for improvement in the prosecution of Disability Hate Crimes.

**What sorts of things are discussed?**

Meetings always start with an update on developments within CPS North East and within the CPS nationally, and Panel members are given an opportunity to ask questions and to comment.

Sometimes the Panel discusses national CPS consultations.

Once a year the Panel is consulted about CPS North East priorities for the following year.

Performance data is explained and discussed – both at the CPS North East Area level, and also in the individual Community Involvement Panel meetings at a more local level

The Panel is consulted on the Area Community Engagement Strategy and the Area Equality and Diversity Strategy, and is updated on the actions arising from these strategies.

The Panel is kept informed as to how national initiatives – for example the Victims Right to Review – are implemented in the North East, and consulted on victim and witness issues.

**Who are the members?**

Panel members have been drawn from a wide range of community organisations across the North East. Current members were recruited in 2010, when information about the Panels was widely distributed through a variety of means. Over the four years since the Panels were established, some members have inevitably had to step down due to personal commitments, and we are therefore now looking to refresh the membership. It is important that our Panel members reflect a variety of communities across the North East, and that there is a geographical balance so that no one part of the region dominates.

**Who are we looking for?**

We are looking for Panel members who will bring a perspective from their own communities, and who will be able to feed back to their own communities about the work of the Panel. Membership of an organisation or group is not a condition of Panel membership, provided that the members have contacts within communities which will inform their approach to the Panel’s work, and through which they can make communities aware of the role of the CPS, and the work the CPS is doing to address community concerns.

The Panel has identified a need to strengthen representation on the Panel of:

* Younger people (aged 17-25)
* People who work with victims of disability hate crime

We are therefore particularly targeting these groups in this round of recruitment.

New members do not necessarily need to have knowledge of the Criminal Justice System as training will be given. Whilst we do our best to present information in an easily digestible way and to avoid jargon, there is a lot of information to be absorbed and discussed at meetings.

**What does membership involve?**

* Attendance at Panel meetings three times a year – the meetings are held at Bowburn Community Centre in County Durham and run from 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. Wherever possible, the CPS will make arrangements for transport for members who would otherwise be unable to get to the venue
* Acting as a “critical friend” to the CPS – being willing to raise concerns and discuss issues in a constructive way
* Being prepared to discuss issues at a strategic level and contribute a community perspective to those discussions
* Feeding back to communities on the work of the Panel to build confidence in the CPS and the wider Criminal Justice System
* No fee is paid for attendance at meetings but reasonable travel expenses will be reimbursed
* There is a requirement that panel members undergo a standard CPS security check. Please note that if you have one or more convictions, this will not automatically mean you will be prevented from joining the panel.

**How do I apply?**

For further information and/or for an application form please contact:

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