

Ian Crooks - Crown Prosecution Service

A day in the life of a CPS lawyer will largely depend on what you're doing on that day. I'll take you through a day where I'm in court in the morning and in the office in the afternoon.

8.00am – 9.00am

After a walk to work the first thing I do every morning is check my emails (let's face it, doesn't everyone?!). Generally there'll be stuff to respond to and information from management about new pieces of legislation. If the query is urgent I'll try and respond first thing, but sometimes there's lots to do so I don't have time.

As I find that the world can look better after a cup of tea, that's normally task two!

9.00am – 10.00am

Down to the serious business of reviewing the morning's court for the final time! A half day trial court session usually involves being prepared to take a trial or two (or three or four!)

As a trial advocate you have to make sure that you have copies of witness statements, copies of any paper exhibits, prepared questions for your witnesses and some idea of what you will say to the defendant in cross-examination on all of the trials that are listed in your court. It's fair to say that preparation is the key to good advocacy!

10.00am – 1.00pm

Birmingham Magistrates' Court morning session is between these hours. As I'm taking you through a trial court scenario, when I get to court I will meet the Prosecution witnesses before court begins, check that they are ok and show them a copy of their statement. I will also speak to the Defence advocate, who might want to talk about the evidence or even offer a plea on behalf of the Defendant.

If the matter(s) go ahead and there is a trial it's then over to me. I have to open the Prosecution case to the Magistrates, call witnesses, hand in exhibits, read statements and the record of the defendant's interview (if there is one!). Once that is done you close the case and wait for the Defendant to give evidence and for your chance to cross-examine him or her. That's where the fun really can begin...!!

If none of the listed trials go ahead (and there can be lots of reasons why they don't) then you will go 'sweeping' other courts that are overloaded with work. This can land you with anything from another trial (which you will not have prepared!!) or cases that need to be adjourned to another date for service of papers or exhibits. It's best to expect the unexpected when 'sweeping'!

1.00pm – 2.00pm

This is supposed to be lunchtime, but as I have my own cases to worry about I normally get stuck into a few of the more simple ones of those before dashing out to the local sandwich shop (I'm sure I'm not alone in this!). I tend to try and respond to emails and work-related queries that have arisen whilst I've been at Court during this time.

2.00pm – 5.30pm (ish!)

When in the office I review my files. I can be allocated anything from a theft matter to dangerous driving. My job is to review those files in conjunction with the Code for Crown Prosecutors and decide whether there is sufficient evidence to provide a realistic prospect of conviction and if so whether it is in the public interest to proceed with that charge.

Fortunately I'm blessed with a mentor who knows the law backwards and a room full of experienced Crown Prosecutors. If I have any issues about the charges or I want to talk about any problems that I perceive with them then there's always someone around to assist.

Recently I have been working on a variety of matters, including quite a serious matter of theft from a person. If I feel that the Prosecution needs more information on a file then that will be requested from the Police, who do the investigating on our behalf.

If I'm in court the following day I'll have to review what's in it. I could get trials again, or a court where the defendants appear in custody or a court where I fix dates for matters to go to trial. A Prosecutor's life is never dull...!