

Greater police prosecution powers to cut costs and deliver swifter justice

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Police prosecution powers are being extended in a bureaucracy busting change to the law announced today by home secretary Theresa May.

In a move to save cut inefficiency and save time and taxpayers' money, the police will be able to take a raft of new offences through the courts without consulting the crown prosecution service (CPS) – stripping out duplication and bringing swifter justice for victims.

Police-led prosecutions can now cover over half of all cases heard in magistrates' courts.

Under the new measures, officers will be able to prosecute criminal damage cases under the value of £5,000, some alcohol and public order offences and driving without due care and attention.

Home secretary Theresa May said:

'Giving police more powers to prosecute offenders will slash unnecessary bureaucracy and deliver swifter justice for victims.

'I want us to be bold and imaginative about transforming policing and the wider criminal justice system to save time and money and deliver a better service for the public.

'Our policing reforms have already stripped away 4.5 million hours of wasted police time - the equivalent of 2,100 officers on the streets. But we must work ever harder to increase efficiency right across the force to help the focus on fighting crime.'

Today's announcement builds on the commitment given to the police in May this year by the home secretary to increase police powers of prosecution. The new measures will add more than 90,000 cases every year to those the police can prosecute, stripping out even more bureaucracy from the system and allowing CPS lawyers to focus on more complex cases.

The CPS will continue to prosecute cases where a defendant pleads not guilty, is under the age of 16, or where required for police operational reasons.

The changes will be tested in nine police force areas to find the best way of working before they are introduced across the country. And they will inform further work between the home office, the attorney general, the CPS and association of chief police officers, to see if more police-led prosecutions can be introduced.

Notes to editors

1. Cases will be handed over to the CPS if a defendant pleads not guilty, is under the age of 16, if the case starts by charge, or if the case results in custody. The last

two provisions are to ensure that police have the discretion to make sure the CPS can deal with unusually serious cases – such as criminal damage as part of a campaign of domestic violence.

2. Together, the new offences will enable police to prosecute an additional estimated 91,000 cases per year (although this will depend on how many are started by charge).