

# The Way We Work



**CCRC**  
Criminal • Cases • Review • Commission

# The Way We Work



The Criminal Cases Review Commission is the independent public body set up in 1997 by Parliament to investigate possible miscarriages of justice. Our job is to decide if there is any new evidence or new argument which might lead the appeal

court to quash a conviction. We also consider a much smaller proportion of applications relating to sentences.

The Commission is entirely independent. We do not represent the defence or prosecution, police, judiciary or any other part of the criminal justice system. Applicants to the Commission are people who believe they have been wrongly convicted or sentenced. Anyone who has been convicted of a criminal offence in England, Wales or Northern Ireland can apply to have their case reviewed, although they should usually have exhausted the normal appeal process first.

It is the role of the Commission to review any new factors which might be relevant. The Commission does not reinvestigate the original case. The Commission considers cases impartially. It employs people with a wide variety of skills and experience, including



lawyers and experienced investigators, to carry out this task. In some cases, we may need to interview new witnesses or those involved in the original case. We may also commission expert reports or arrange for forensic tests, such as DNA profiling.

The Criminal Appeal Act 1995 gives us the power to obtain relevant material from any public body. In addition to basic material from court and prosecution files, there are occasions when it is necessary to obtain other material such as medical or social services records. Sometimes we also need to look at defence files or obtain material from private companies or individuals and will seek their co-operation in providing their records.

The majority of cases can be dealt with quite quickly, but more complex cases can take months or even years. However, because the Commission receives several new applications every day, applications wait in a queue before

being allocated to Case Review Managers. This means that detailed work may not actually begin on a case for some time after an application is received.

Once a review is complete, if a referral appears possible a committee of three Commissioners considers the case and decides whether or not to refer it to an appeal court. A single Commissioner can make a decision not to refer a case.

If the Commission decides that there is a real possibility that a conviction would be overturned, we send the case to the relevant appeal court which must hear the appeal. It usually takes some time before the appeal hearing takes place. Whether or not a conviction is quashed or a sentence reduced is entirely a matter for the appeal court.

The fact that a review is under way does not automatically lead to a referral. In many cases, we conclude that there are no grounds to refer and only the applicant and a small number of people involved in the case are ever aware that a review has been held.

Because most cases are not referred we do not routinely inform victims of the offences that a review is under way, but we do have a responsibility to inform victims if a referral is imminent or if news of the review is likely to come to their attention or enter the public domain. We actively try to minimise the distress caused to victims and we work with



other agencies such as the Police, Crown Prosecution Service and the Probation Service to do so. The Commission is committed to the Government's Code of Practice for Victims of Crime. Our victim notification policy is available on our website at [www.ccrcc.gov.uk](http://www.ccrcc.gov.uk)

Further information is available for witnesses, victims and families of victims from the Crown Prosecution Service and Victim Support on the following:

[www.cps.gov.uk/victims\\_witnesses](http://www.cps.gov.uk/victims_witnesses)  
[www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)

**Victim Supportline:**  
**0845 30 30 900**



Alpha Tower,  
Suffolk Street Queensway,  
Birmingham B1 1TT  
e: [info@ccrc.gov.uk](mailto:info@ccrc.gov.uk)  
t: 0121 633 1800  
f: 0121 633 1823  
[www.ccr.gov.uk](http://www.ccr.gov.uk)