



HM Chief Inspector of the Crown Prosecution Service Annual Report 2010-2011

Michael Fuller QPM was appointed HM Chief Inspector of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) on 1 April 2010. On 14 July 2011 he submitted his second Annual Report to the Rt Hon Dominic Grieve QC the Attorney General for the year 2010-11.

The report provides an overall assessment of CPS performance from the Inspectorate's varied programme of Area inspections, thematic reviews and audits in the same period.

The report reflects the mixed picture of CPS performance that Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPSI) found during the year. In the main, the more complex and serious casework continues to be handled well. The majority of cases continue to be prosecuted by the CPS successfully. But the quality of case handling in the generality of cases is very variable. While some elements appear to have improved, the quality of prosecutors' decisions at the charging stage appears to be declining. Despite the serious attention that the CPS has given to its structures to enable better preparation of cases for court, good and proactive case management was found in only about 35% of cases the Inspectorate examined. There has been some improvement from previous years in responding to the needs of victims and witnesses, although this too presents a similarly mixed picture.

HMCPSI's Annual Report recognises that the CPS has sought to improve the quality of its case handling through the introduction of Core Quality Standards for its prosecutors. The Inspectorate has supported the CPS in this, and will continue to do so through its inspection programme, which focuses on Areas of highest risk, and its close monitoring and follow-up assessments of those where weaknesses are found.

Michael Fuller commented

"The mixed picture of performance is a matter for concern. Whilst the substantial majority of cases are prosecuted effectively, the public require assurance that all criminal cases are dealt with professionally and appropriately, based on sound decision-making and prompt action throughout. The proper treatment of victims and witnesses, particularly vulnerable witnesses involved in cases with sensitive issues, is also vital to public confidence in the criminal justice system. The CPS faces a very real challenge over the next four years, with a reducing budget and staff numbers. There will be many organisational and structural issues requiring attention. In such circumstances the need to focus on casework quality is even more acute. Making the right decision is not only right in the interests of justice, but will reduce inefficiencies and waste. Improving quality must be the key driver for the CPS over the coming years."

Notes to editors

- 1 HMCPSI is an independent statutory body established by the Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate Act 2000, which came into force on 1 October 2000. HM Chief Inspector is appointed by, and reports to, the Attorney General.
- 2 The Inspectorate can also undertake work on a delegated basis. HMCPSI also undertakes non-statutory inspection of other prosecuting authorities. During 2010 the Inspectorate undertook an inspection on a non-statutory basis of the Service Prosecuting Authority.