

***HM CROWN PROSECUTION SERVICE  
INSPECTORATE***

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**CPS WEST YORKSHIRE**

Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate has today published its report of the inspection of CPS West Yorkshire. The team of inspectors found that CPS West Yorkshire is performing soundly in relation to both casework and the management of the Area. The management team has created strong foundations and developed a clear strategy for future development, taking steps to create a strong performance culture with a system of structured performance monitoring. Staff morale is generally high and they continue to show a commitment to their work. The inspectors also identified several aspects of CPS work where improvement was needed. They expressed concern about the depth of the initial consideration given to cases, as well as the thoroughness of continuing review. They cited as an example the fact that, in the opinion of the inspectors, 10% of the cases subsequently discontinued by the CPS should not have been accepted for prosecution on initial consideration. There is also a need for better recording of decisions and the reasons for them. The quality of pre-charge advice to the police was also sound but it was frequently late.

Stephen Wooler, Chief Inspector of HMCPSI, said:

“CPS West Yorkshire has made real headway since the restructuring of the CPS in 1999. It has robustly and successfully driven forward change programmes both internally and within the criminal justice system more

widely. It is to its credit that, during this period, it has not only maintained but also improved in many respects the standard of its casework.”

As well as finding that casework decisions are generally sound, the inspectors found that racially aggravated crime and child abuse cases are dealt with sensitively. The Area has played a prominent role in promoting a better understanding of issues surrounding domestic violence cases and is particularly proactive in its efforts to tackle youth offending. The reports prepared on cases with adverse outcomes in the Crown Court are detailed and managers highlight any trends or issues ensuring that lessons are learned from casework.

It was found, however that significant improvements need to be made in respect of file endorsements and file management. The review decisions are generally correct but the endorsement s do not always indicate depth or thoroughness and poor court endorsements make the monitoring of custody time limits extremely difficult.

The Area has developed effective partnerships with local criminal justice agencies and together they are striving to improve the service to victims and witnesses.

Specific findings by the Inspectorate include:

- The Area has a low rate of advice given to the police pre-charge compared to the National figures. Some cases would have benefited from pre-charge advice.
- The Custody time limits systems require review; a number of expiry dates were calculated incorrectly indicating a failure of proper management checks, though many of the problems inspectors found were the result of poor file endorsements.
- The Area has played a prominent role in tackling youth offending. Figures for the final quarter of 2000 show the time taken to process persistent young offenders as 94 days. Although this is an increase on the previous two quarters, the latest available figure (February 2001) shows an encouraging reduction to 81 days.

- Recent measures have been taken to address deficiencies in performance in relation to disclosure of unused material. These include a new Area standard on disclosure and the use of case builders within police CJUs, who are trained and experienced in handling unused material and who will act as disclosure officer.
- Committals to the Crown Court are well prepared and there have been some improvements in timeliness of preparation and service on the defence. Greater improvement could be made if the Area works with the police to ensure that committal files are submitted to CPS within guidelines.
- The Area has a strong management team and an efficient Area Secretariat. It has used the recent restructuring into Criminal Justice Units and Trial units as an opportunity to examine its performance and implement initiatives to address those aspects which require improvement. It has systems in place for allocating and monitoring its budget. Area staff are well deployed and the Area training and development group ensures that training needs are identified and met. Training needs are established from consideration of the forward job plans of individual staff.
- The Area is particularly proactive in the field of equality and diversity. It has established its own equality and diversity group comprising a cross section of staff from all levels and minority groups. The group advises on and monitors the development and implementation of diversity policies within the Area. Good relationships have been established with the local Race Equality Council.

Responding to the report Neil Franklin, Chief Crown Prosecutor, said:

“I am pleased that the hard work and commitment of CPS West Yorkshire staff has been recognised in the report. I fully accept that there are aspects of our work which need to improve, though, as has been duly recognised, the Area has put in place measures designed to address these shortcomings robustly.

“What is apparent from the report is that fundamental changes have been introduced very successfully with the support of staff. Senior managers in CPS West Yorkshire endeavour to provide a clear strategic lead and I welcome the acknowledgement that a strong performance culture has been successfully developed.

“The report reflects fairly the achievements of the last two years and its strongly optimistic tone provides clear reassurance that we are involved in a process of continual improvement underpinned by a willingness to examine critically every aspect of our work.”

### **Notes to Editors**

1. This is the latest report of Her Majesty’s Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate in the cycle of inspections based on the 42 Area structure adopted by the CPS on April 1 1999. The CPS is a national service, but operates on a decentralised basis with each Area led by a Chief Crown Prosecutor who enjoys substantial autonomy.
2. CPS West Yorkshire as an Area comprises of two criminal justice units (CJU). The Bradford, Calder and Huddersfield CJU is based principally in Bradford with teams at Wakefield and Halifax police stations. The unit handles cases at Bradford, Bingley, Halifax, Huddersfield and Dewsbury magistrates’ courts. The Leeds and Wakefield CJU is based principally in Leeds with a team at Wakefield. The unit handles cases in Leeds, Pudsey, Wetherby, Pontefract and Wakefield magistrates’ courts. There are two trial units (TU), the Bradford TU handles cases in the Crown Court at Bradford and the Leeds TU handles cases in the Crown Court at Leeds.
3. CPS Yorkshire employs the equivalent of 251 full time staff; this figure includes a number of part-time staff.
4. In the year ending 31 December 2000 the area handled approximately 79,230 cases in the magistrates’ courts. 7, 033 cases were handled during the same period in the Crown Court. In addition advice was given to the police before charge in a further 2,033 cases.
5. Before visiting the Area the team of inspectors examined a total of 611 cases. The team visited the area for a total of three weeks during February and March. The inspectors interviewed staff of all levels from each of the offices. The team also spoke to representatives of other criminal justice agencies in the Area. Observations were made on 46 advocates at magistrates and Crown courts, these included CPS lawyers, agents and counsel. The team was also assisted during the

on-site phases by a lay inspector who looked at the public interest side of casework decisions, the handling of complaints and the treatment of victims and witnesses.

6. Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate was established by the Crown Prosecution Act 2000, which came into effect on 1 October 2000 as a statutory body. The Inspectorate had, previously, been a unit within the CPS headquarters. The Chief Inspector is appointed by and reports to the Attorney General.
7. For further information, please contact either Jan Wilson at HMCPSI (tel: 01904 545488) or Suzy Jenkinson at CPS West Yorkshire (tel: 0113 290 2817).