

## **Methodology Principles for Joint Thematic Inspections**

### **Background and introduction**

This document is designed as an internal document for use by HMICFRS, HMCPSI, HMI Probation and HMI Prisons in joint thematic inspections published as CJI reports.

It is designed to be a set of principles and expectations at each stage of the inspection process that will be followed irrespective of which inspectorate is leading the inspection. It provides some certainty to those involved in delivering the joint inspections operationally but allows inspectorates to retain flexibility to deliver in accordance with their own processes and structures.

### **Core principles**

- 1. Every CJI inspection will have a collaborative and cohesive joint approach at all stages.**
- 2. It is essential that there is a lead inspectorate to ensure that there is appropriate oversight and responsibility for delivering the inspection as well as production and publication of the joint report.**
- 3. The lead inspectorate, whilst being proactive in proposing scopes, detailed methodology, timescales and other key aspects of the inspection will not make unilateral decisions about any key aspect of scoping, methodology, assessment of findings and making judgements, drafting, recommendations or publication. In this context 'key' means any decision that directly impacts on the logistics, practicalities, range of evidence, findings, judgments or report.**
- 4. Inspectorates involved in CJI inspections that are not leading will contribute to the making of key decisions so that the inspection and final report is jointly owned and delivered. This approach will ensure a truly joint approach throughout the course of inspections and model the partnership working we expect in the criminal justice system.**
- 5. All joint inspections will have regard to the 10 principles of public sector inspection. See annex 1.**
- 6. The participating inspectorates will each identify a lead inspector (and senior level oversight) for each thematic inspection prior to the development of the scope and methodology<sup>1</sup>. These lead inspectors, together with those overseeing the**

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<sup>1</sup> There are different structures in each of the four inspectorates for oversight of joint inspections.

**inspection, will have sufficient authority to make decisions on behalf of their inspectorate or be able to swiftly consult with the relevant person in their inspectorate where required. Wherever possible, there will be continuity of lead inspectors. They will update the inspection lead inspector as to availability to ensure that meeting dates and deadlines are jointly owned and realistic.**

**7. All reports and material will be agreed jointly by all participating inspectorates prior to publication.**

**8. A media strategy and press materials will be agreed jointly by all participating inspectorates prior to publication.**

### **Core Expectations on joint thematic inspection**

#### Stage one – Planning, scope and methodology

1. The development group representatives from the relevant inspectorates will have responsibility for ensuring that liaison with any stakeholders or other key individuals has taken place to inform the scope and/or methodology.
2. The scope (terms of reference) will, as a minimum, cover background information as to why the inspection is taking place, the inspection aims and set out the main inspection question with any sub questions/categories.
3. The methodology will set out the approach to evidence gathering. Consideration will be given to which methods should be adopted and how they will add value to the inspection and also consideration of how it will likely be presented in the final report. E.g. if we are using victims' voice with a limited number of participants, how will this be presented alongside other evidence gathered. Consideration will be given to aspects including but not limited to the following:
  - File examination
  - Document reviews
  - Data
  - Reality checks
  - Interviews
  - Focus groups
  - Surveys
  - Requests for information

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HMICFRS - lead inspector and the Portfolio Director/Assistant Portfolio Director. HMCPSI - lead inspector and the Deputy Chief Inspector. HMI Probation - lead inspector and the Head of Thematic and Joint Inspection. HMI Prisons - lead inspector and Team Leader.

- Calls for evidence
  - External reference groups
  - User voice commissions
  - Independent commissioned research
  - Court or other observations
4. Discuss and agree the content and approach so that there is a shared understanding of what the inspection is (scope) and how the evidence will be gathered (methodology).
  5. Agree provisional draft structure for the final report to inform scope, methodology and evidence gathering onsite. The report will be in the house style of the lead inspectorate subject to agreeing at this stage, any 'red lines' across inspectorates about drafting. Focus will be on content rather than specific wording or style.
  6. The lead inspectorate will have overall responsibility for drafting the report but will agree with all inspectorates involved in the inspection how they will contribute.
  7. Consider who the audience of the report will be and agree a high-level approach to publication at this stage to consider stakeholders (engagement during the inspection and on publication) and media strategy (soft launch or proactive media).
  8. Once the lead inspector has completed the draft scope and methodology it will be circulated to the relevant inspectorates' representatives on the development group to consider. The development group representatives will work with the leads to agree any amendments and for ensuring that individual inspectorates' internal processes for sign off are achieved.
  9. Once sign off is completed the terms of reference will be uploaded onto the CJI website under the 'inspections in progress' section. See annex 3 for template.
  10. The timescale of the inspection will be agreed including dates of any fieldwork (generally avoiding peak leave periods for those we inspect unless relevant to the inspection question) so it can be included in commissioning letters. A proposed timetable should be drawn up at this stage and agreed by all inspectorates to ensure diary planning for relevant stages and with key individuals including Chief Inspectors, and to ensure momentum is maintained throughout the inspection. The timetable will also allow for any additional work to set up e.g. HMICFRS obtaining access to IT in individual forces. It should also include any external reference groups and time for review of the draft report by those we inspect and any other critical readers.

11. A project plan will be drafted and maintained by the lead inspectorate.

Stage two - Selection of areas for fieldwork and commissioning

12. The selection of police forces, CPS Areas, probation delivery units, youth offending services or prisons/young offenders' institutions/other custody for fieldwork will be based upon data and other intelligence and evidence relevant to the inspection question agreed by the leads e.g. well or poor performing, innovative practice, geographical or structural variations etc.
13. Consider the existing inspection burden including whether London/Wales should be included.
14. Consider the number of areas included with a view to balancing gathering the best evidence, resources required and inspection burden.
15. Each inspectorate has a different approach to selection and commissioning:
- HMICFRS – regional chiefs of staff and HMIs are consulted to identify any force-specific issues. Contact is made with force liaison officers who can raise issues for consideration. Once agreed by HMI Board, letter sent to Chief Constable by SRO.
  - HMCPSI – Deputy Chief Inspector liaises with Directors of Legal Services in CPS to identify the Areas to be visited and will then decide having regard to any representations made. Once agreed the Deputy Chief Inspector send commissioning letters to CPS Directors of Legal Services regarding the overall thematic inspection and to the Chief Crown Prosecutors of the Areas to be inspected.
  - HMI Probation – no consultation or liaison with the sector. Announcement made at least six weeks prior to fieldwork activity.
  - HMI Prisons – No consultation or liaison with the sector. Advance warning given to the establishments selected.
16. Letters to those being inspected (called commissioning letters, letters of announcement or letters to Chief Constables) (see annex 2 for template) on CJI headed paper will be sent out a minimum of six weeks before any onsite fieldwork commences.

17. These letters will only be sent out upon authority being given by the development group representatives<sup>2</sup> from each of the relevant inspectorates involved in the inspection to ensure all relevant internal processes of the inspectorates involved have been completed.

### Stage three - Pre-onsite fieldwork

*Note: the scope and methodology agreed in any joint inspection will set out how any fieldwork is to be carried out. In some joint inspections this will be teams from different inspectorates working together to assess an aspect of criminal justice e.g. HMICFRS and HMCPSI looking at joint case building, in other inspections this will involve individual inspectorates looking at separate parts of the criminal justice system relating to a single issue e.g. HMI Probation and HMI Prisons looking at experiences of women in custody through to re-settlement in the community. The core expectations in stages three and four should be considered and followed where relevant.*

18. Agree which fieldwork inspection activities must be done onsite and which can be carried out remotely.
19. Agree whether the lead inspector for the overall inspection drafts timetable for all fieldwork for all organisations or whether this is delegated to the leads for each of the inspectorates participating with the overall lead pulling it together.
20. Agree numbers of inspectors required for each fieldwork visit based on the agreed timetable of activity and ensuring value for money. Where possible activity should take place with joint pairs or teams of inspectors so as to gain the maximum from the joint cross CJS perspective.
21. Confirm any security issues and clarify to the team. To include any security clearance required and any security issues around access to IT systems of those we inspect.
22. Agree what information needs to be shared with the fieldwork teams before commencing and who will do that.

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<sup>2</sup> The senior level cross inspectorate group that supports Chief Inspectors - see joint inspection framework for more information. [Joint Inspection Framework \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://justiceinspectorates.gov.uk)

23. Agree how evidence will be recorded and shared to include data, file examination, observations, reality checks and interview notes etc and who will record. This will be in accordance with the lead inspectorate's own methods of recording as long as it is possible for that inspectorate to share all inspection evidence and data gathered with the other inspectorates in the inspection so that they can consider all information and interrogate and quality assure any data for emerging findings and report drafting. It is not envisaged the licences for individual inspectorates' systems but that it can be shared using WORD, excel or other applications. In the long term the development group are investigating whether it is possible to establish a CJI SharePoint site for us in joint thematic inspections to address this issue. Regard should be had to the retention and destruction policies of the different inspectorates referred to in paragraph 45 below when planning this aspect of inspection.
24. Agree how the fieldwork teams will be updated in terms of information in advance of visiting an area and updating whilst onsite.
25. Agree how any pre onsite inspection activity will be split across the inspectorates – to include analysis of data, document reading, file examination etc.
26. Consider what de-briefs and/or actions should be taken whilst carrying out fieldwork and agree at this stage approach to:
- Debriefs amongst fieldwork inspection teams at the end of each day
  - Any de-briefs to be held with those we inspect during the fieldwork stage
  - Any actions to be taken by inspectors when identifying issues in live cases
  - Any actions to be taken by inspectors during observations.

#### Stage four – Onsite fieldwork

27. Agree how interviews will be conducted. Will inspectors be required to assess the evidence gathered so far and ask questions as a result or will interview plans be provided to help identify key aspects for questions or will a list of questions be supplied?
28. The presumption is that all interviews and focus groups will be conducted jointly with inspectors from the different inspectorates to maximise on cross CJ experience and knowledge.

### Stage five – Evaluation and emerging findings

29. All emerging findings and evaluations meetings to be carried out jointly.
30. Hold a meeting involving all inspectorates at this stage to finalise the final report structure having regard to the findings and evidence and to agree broadly the content of each section. Development group representatives to be involved to provide early strategic direction.
31. Consider and agree whether any emerging findings will be shared at this stage with those inspected.
32. An evaluation of how the inspection worked will also be carried out to identify improvements in joint inspection methodology. This will include inspection team representatives as well as development group members.

### Stage six - Report writing

33. Drafting the report will be in accordance with the agreement reached at stage one, subject to any agreed changes. Each inspectorate has its own house style but to avoid unnecessary rework and delay there should be joint review on an ongoing basis to ensure that the report does not cross the agreed red lines that each inspectorate has in its report writing. Inspection findings will be based on clear evidence, triangulated wherever possible. Where recommendations are to be made, these will be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound) recommendations that are clearly linked to the evidence and that will make a difference.
34. Agreement should be reached about how comments and suggested edits will be addressed to ensure a collaborative and joined up approach throughout. Where possible this should be done by discussion to avoid version control issues, particularly where three or more inspectorates are involved. It is hoped that a CJJI SharePoint site will eradicate the version control issues.
35. Drafting should not commence until the emerging findings meeting has taken place and the evidence and any quality assurance of findings and/or data and/or file examination by all inspectorates has concluded and been agreed.

36. Save where there is a specific request or reason, the report will not be shared with HMIs or CIs until agreed by development group representatives of the inspectorates involved.
37. HMI / CI approval should be obtained before the draft report is shared with stakeholders and critical readers.
38. Agree what request will be made of critical readers (factual accuracy only or additional information as well?) and how they will be responded to.
39. HMI and CI approval required for signoff of final report.

#### Stage seven - Publication and media

40. Finalise arrangements for checks for factual accuracy.
41. Agree stakeholder lists to confirm who reports will be sent to and when. This must include whether and to whom embargoed copies will be sent (HMI Prisons, HMI Probation and HMCPSP send embargoed copies for submissions to respective sponsoring departments 5 days prior to publication. HMICFRS does not).
42. Agree whether the lead inspectorate is sending the reports to all stakeholders or whether the individual inspectorates will send to their own stakeholder list. Where the latter, lists must be cross referenced to avoid duplication.
43. Finalise the media strategy on publication – soft launch or full press engagement. This should include ensuring that the joint nature of the inspection is clearly reflected including in ensuring all CIs/HMIs are referred to or quoted in press materials and whether only the CI or HMI of the lead inspectorate will take interview bids or if this will be spread across all the participating inspectorates.
44. The lead inspectorate will take responsibility for managing the publication and press to include drafting the press notice and any briefings for those engaging with the media, incorporating contributions and comments from across the teams to continue the joint approach. All press material will reflect the joint nature of the inspection and the lead inspectorate will manage any bids for interview in accordance with the press strategy.
45. Consider whether to carry out any post publication activity in accordance with the HMI Probation approach. HMI Probation have launch events for thematic inspection



led by the CI with contributions from the team. CI round table to help embed recommendations with the agencies inspected.

#### Stage eight – Retention and destruction

Note: when the CJJI SharePoint site is active. This section will require review.

46. Each inspectorate has a different approach set out below so agreement should be reached in advance about what material will be retained post publication.
- a. HMICFRS - Documents used in the inspection are retained on SharePoint. Inspectors individual notebooks can be destroyed subject to all notes being on the EGT.
  - b. HMCPSI - All inspection materials other than data and published report destroyed the day before publication.
  - c. HMI Probation – between three months and 10 years depending on the sensitivity of the data.
  - d. HMI Prisons - Electronic copies of evidence gathered from thematic inspections are kept for three years before review. At review can be kept for longer e.g. if follow up thematics are planned. Paper copies are destroyed soon after publication. [Records Retention and Disposal Schedule \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/records-retention-and-disposal-schedule/)

## **Annex 1 – The 10 Principles of Public Sector Inspection**

The principles of inspection in this formal statement are from the Government's policy on inspection of public services (July 2003). They place the following expectations on inspection providers and on the Departments sponsoring them:

**1 The purpose of improvement.** There should be an explicit concern on the part of inspectors to contribute to the improvement of the service being inspected. This should guide the focus, method, reporting and follow-up of inspection. In framing recommendations, an inspector should recognise good performance and address any failure appropriately. Inspection should aim to generate data and intelligence that enable Departments more quickly to calibrate the progress of reform in their sectors and make appropriate adjustments.

**2 A focus on outcomes,** which means considering service delivery to the end users of the services rather than concentrating on internal management arrangements.

**3 A user perspective.** Inspection should be delivered with a clear focus on the experience of those for whom the service is provided, as well as on internal management arrangements. Inspection should encourage innovation and diversity and not be solely compliance-based.

**4 Proportionate to risk.** Over time, inspectors should modify the extent of future inspection according to the quality of performance by the service provider. For example, good performers should undergo less inspection, so that resources are concentrated on areas of greatest risk.

**5 Inspectors should encourage rigorous self-assessment by managers.** Inspectors should challenge the outcomes of managers' self-assessments, take them into account in the inspection process, and provide a comparative benchmark.

**6 Inspectors should use impartial evidence.** Evidence, whether quantitative or qualitative, should be validated and credible.

**7 Inspectors should disclose the criteria they use to form judgments.**

**8 Inspectors should be open about their processes, willing to take any complaints seriously, and able to demonstrate a robust quality assurance process.**

**9 Inspectors should have regard to value for money,** their own included.

**10 Inspectors should continually learn from experience, in order to become increasingly effective.** This can be done by assessing their own impact on the service provider's ability to improve and by sharing best practice with other inspectors.

Annex 2 – template letter to inspected body



**[insert details of relevant Chief Inspectors]**

By email

[Insert addressee]

[date]

Dear [insert],  
**[title of inspection]**

Yours sincerely/faithfully

etc

Annex 3 – Template terms of reference for publication on

## **Joint Inspection of [Insert inspection]**

### **Terms of Reference - for publication**

#### **Background**

[Insert here brief details of why we are doing this inspection]

#### **Inspection aims**

[Insert what the inspection is aiming to achieve e.g. in the joint case building inspection this was as follows: The inspection aims to assess the culture and communication between the police and the CPS in building case files, including police and CPS teamwork, such as strategic and operational liaison and standard setting, data sharing, and the effectiveness of joint operational improvement meetings.]

#### **The inspection question**

[Insert main inspection question here]

#### **Inspection criteria**

[insert here the sub questions / sub criteria where relevant]

#### **Police force//CPS Area/Probation Delivery Unit/Youth Offending Unit/Prison/Young Offenders' Institution/Place of Detention selection**

[Amend above as required and insert here details of the fieldwork sites]

#### **Inspection methodology**

[Insert high level details of how the inspection will be carried out. Consider file examination, interviews, focus groups, reality checks, court observations, systems checks, interviews with stakeholders, surveys etc]

#### **Proposed inspection timetable**

[Insert proposed start and publication dates plus any other relevant key dates]