

## ***PRESS RELEASE***

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### **CPS SOUTH YORKSHIRE**

Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate has today published its Report on the inspection of CPS South Yorkshire.

CPS South Yorkshire has maintained, and in some aspects improved upon, the high level of performance recorded in the last Inspection Report in February 2001. This is impressive during a time in which the Area has been implementing the many national initiatives, both within the CPS itself and the criminal justice system as a whole, including the successful introduction and performance in the Area of the street crimes initiative.

The quality of the Area's casework continues to be good overall, and decision-making is generally sound. The Area has helped achieve lower ineffective trial rates (cases listed for a contested hearing which do not go ahead on the date set) than the national average in both the magistrates' courts and, in particular, in the Crown Court. Additionally, persistent young offenders are dealt with well within the Government's target of 71 days from arrest to sentence.

Significantly more offenders are being brought to justice in South Yorkshire (+9.7%) since the baseline year of 2001-02, but a concern of inspectors was that a number of committals to the Crown Court were being discharged because the prosecution were not ready to proceed. The Area needs to monitor these and, in conjunction with the police, take action to overcome the delays and re-instate cases wherever appropriate.

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*Promoting Improvement in Criminal Justice*

The sound management of CPS South Yorkshire ensures that there is a close and good relationship between the Area and its criminal justice partners, driving up performance and ensuring that national priorities are being met.

Stephen Wooler, HM Chief Inspector of the Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate, said:

“It is pleasing to deliver such a positive Report. The managers and staff in CPS South Yorkshire deserve real credit for what has been achieved. There are some matters which can be improved, but I am confident that the Area will address them vigorously.”

**Other main findings** by the Inspectorate include:

- \* In conjunction with police, the Area has successfully tackled the Government’s street crime initiative.
- \* Together with the police and magistrates’ courts, the Area is currently piloting a scheme to improve the quality of pre-trial reviews and also has sound systems in place to ensure that cases for summary trials are ready to proceed when listed.
- \* Inspectors had concerns about the preparedness of some agents in the magistrates’ courts and the experience and expertise of some counsel instructed in the Crown Court, in both routine and sensitive cases. The quality of instructions to counsel also needs to be improved.
- \* The care of victims and witnesses is generally satisfactory and a pilot project in Sheffield is aimed at improving this further. The Area needs to ensure that victims are notified where charges are amended substantially, or discontinued, in all cases, and that this is done in a timely manner.

- \* The Area has well defined processes and strategies relating to people management and staff are content with training and development opportunities. There is a clear strategy to implement equality and diversity within the workplace, and a commendation was received at a recent CPS Equality and Diversity Awards ceremony.
- \* There is a strong emphasis on monitoring performance, coupled with a systematic approach to accountability and performance improvement, through an Area self-assessment programme.
- \* There is positive and systematic engagement with the community, by a range of South Yorkshire staff, in an effort to improve public confidence in both the CPS and the CJS generally.
- \* The management of financial resources is a strength within the Area. Sound systems are in place and there are a number of experienced staff to manage its finances.
- \* There is full participation within the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) and a partnership approach that is focused on ‘making it happen’. The Chief Crown Prosecutor chairs the LCJB Public Confidence Group.

Responding to the Report, Chief Crown Prosecutor Judith Walker, said:

“I was delighted to receive such a positive Report which recognises the Area’s sustained achievements, including the successful implementation of many new initiatives. Our success is down to the professionalism of our staff and the co-operation of our criminal justice partners. The Report has identified some issues requiring attention which we acknowledge and will address.”

An Executive Summary of the Report is attached.

## Notes to Editors:

1. In November 2002 HMCPSI commenced its second programme of Area inspections of the reorganised CPS. The aim is to visit all 42 CPS Areas in England and Wales twice over a four-year period. During that period each Area will receive at least one full inspection; the second may be either full or intermediate depending on circumstances.
2. The inspection of CPS South Yorkshire was a full inspection. The Area was last reported on in February 2001.
3. CPS South Yorkshire has a Criminal Justice Unit (CJU) with teams based at Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham (all co-located with the police), and Sheffield. These offices deal with magistrates' court work. The Trial Unit is based in Sheffield and deals with Crown Court work.
4. At the time of the inspection CPS South Yorkshire employed the equivalent of 168.3 full time staff.
5. In the year to September 2003, the Area handled 39,726 cases in the magistrates' courts and 4,167 cases in the Crown Court. In addition, pre-charge advice was given to the police in 1,336 cases, which was 3% of its caseload.
6. Before visiting the Area for two weeks during February 2004, the team of inspectors examined a total of 214 cases drawn from all of South Yorkshire's units. The inspectors interviewed CPS staff at all levels from each unit and also spoke to representatives of other criminal justice agencies in the Area. Observations were made of advocates at both magistrates' and Crown Courts, including CPS Prosecutors, agents and counsel. The team was also assisted during the on-site phase by a lay inspector who looked at the handling of complaints and the treatment of victims and witnesses by the CPS.
7. 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 CPS Headquarters. The Chief Inspector is appointed by, and reports to, the Attorney General.
8. For further information, please contact either Deborah Peters at HMCPSI (Tel: 01904 545488; e-mail: [Deborah.Peters@cps.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Deborah.Peters@cps.gsi.gov.uk)) or Anne Perry at CPS South Yorkshire (Tel: 0114 229 8605; e-mail: [Anne.Perry@cps.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Anne.Perry@cps.gsi.gov.uk)).