



Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate Follow-up of the inspection of CPS Bedfordshire

CPS Bedfordshire has improved say inspectors

HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPSI) has today published its report of the follow-up inspection of CPS Bedfordshire (now part of CPS Thames and Chiltern).

HM Chief Inspector, Michael Fuller QPM, said:

"The staff and management of the former CPS Bedfordshire have worked hard to implement the recommendations that were made in our inspection report of October 2010 in which the Area was assessed as Good. Area performance and outcomes have improved over the last 18 months. This follow-up inspection shows that if CPS Areas take action to implement our recommendations there can be an incremental improvement in service delivery and outcomes."

Summary of the main follow-up findings:

- The Area has achieved two of the four priority recommendations. It has reviewed staff resources available to provide charging decisions to the police, and increased the use of in-house prosecutors for certain types of trial work. The remaining two priority recommendations are no longer applicable due to the Area restructure.
- The Area has achieved or made substantial progress in meeting six secondary recommendations, in particular improving aspects of pre-charge decision-making, the quality of indictments and aspects of the service to victims and witnesses. One secondary recommendation was not progressed.
- The Area has also taken action to address aspects of performance where improvement was required, which was detailed in the text of the inspection report; this shows an impressive commitment to address weaknesses and drive improvement.

For any queries or interviews please call Anisha Visram on 020 7210 1148 or mobile: 07901 856 348.

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. The Chief Inspector is appointed by, and reports to, the Attorney General.
- 2 HMCPSI undertook an inspection of CPS Bedfordshire which was published in October 2010.
- 3 The October 2010 inspection rated CPS Bedfordshire as Good. The Inspectorate makes assessments of performance using a model which produces an overall assessment of Excellent, Good, Fair or Poor. Further details of the rating system can be found on our website www.hmcpsi.gov.uk.
- 4 In April 2011, as part of a national reorganisation of the Crown Prosecution Service, CPS Bedfordshire was subsumed within the new CPS Thames and Chiltern Area.

Annex A: Progress against recommendations and aspects for improvement

Recommendation/Compliance issue	Rating as at October 2011
Priority recommendations	
1 The Group Senior Responsible Officer, in conjunction with the Area Management Team, should within six months of the implementation of Daytime Direct review the Area's current resource provision to determine whether it is at the correct level when compared with resource provision across the Group.	Achieved.
2 The Chief Crown Prosecutor and Area Business Manager should meet regularly with the Group Finance Manager to review the Area's budget, to enable any remedial actions to be taken promptly.	No longer applicable.
3 The Area should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review its overall structure and produce costed proposals to make substantive savings to achieve a balanced budget; • work with the Group to produce an agreed budget reduction plan; and • only backfill essential vacant administrative posts. 	No longer applicable.
4 The Area should reduce its spend on special fee trials by using in-house prosecutors save in exceptional circumstances.	Achieved.
Secondary recommendations	
1 The Group District Crown Prosecutor responsible for Daytime Direct Charging should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bring to the attention of police supervisors those cases where the prosecutor is rubber stamping decisions the police should have taken; and • discuss with individual prosecutors any case where they appear to have been unnecessarily risk averse. 	Substantial progress.
2 The CJU Unit Heads should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyse the reasons for cracked and ineffective trials; and • report issues of concern to the CCP. 	Achieved but now no longer applicable.
3 The Trial Unit Head should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review each case where the plea and case management feedback form indicated that the indictment had to be amended; • identify and disseminate to prosecutors and paralegal officers any learning points; and • demonstrate that performance is improving against our findings. 	Substantial progress.
4 The Area Unit Heads should undertake an audit of the level of compliance with the sensitive material procedures and provide written assurance to the CCP either that there is now full compliance or that further steps have been taken to secure full compliance.	Not progressed.
5 In cases where victims and witnesses are entitled to the protection of special measures when giving evidence, prosecutors should ensure they make an informed decision as to what measures the victim or witness requires.	Limited progress.

Recommendation/Compliance issue	Rating as at October 2011
<p>6 The Luton CJU Head should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • liaise with the Witness Service and request the detail of all future cases where there has not been timely provision of the necessary information to the Witness Service; • identify the reasons for any late provision and take any necessary remedial action; and • demonstrate performance improvement. 	Achieved.
<p>7 The Area should ensure that all Direct Communication with Victim letters to the victims of domestic violence include details of the National Domestic Violence Helpline.</p>	Limited progress.
<p>8 The Area should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clarify with the Group Operations Centre (GOC) why the Area requires additional performance data and agree jointly with the GOC what proportion of this additional data is essential for its business needs; and • develop regular meetings with the Group Performance Officer. 	Achieved.
<p>9 The Area should undertake a comparative review of the control checks used in the Trial Unit, and the Bedford and Luton CJUs to ensure that good practice is adopted across all units.</p>	Substantial progress.

Compliance issues	
<p>1 With immediate effect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duty prosecutors should include in the MG3 for youth offenders their view on mode of trial representations in grave crime cases having regard to the age of the defendant, the relevant Sentence Counsel Guidelines and pertinent case law; and • Unit Heads should monitor compliance as part of the Core Quality Standards Monitoring regime. 	Achieved.
<p>2 CJU Heads should ensure that a pre-charge failed case report, to the required standard, is compiled in every case where proceedings are discontinued.</p>	Limited progress but no longer applicable.
<p>3 With immediate effect the Trial Unit Head should instruct trial counsel to provide a report in all rape cases which result in an acquittal.</p>	Achieved.
<p>4 The OBM checklist should be used correctly at Luton CJU.</p>	Achieved.