



Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate Audit of the handling of correspondence by the Crown Prosecution Service

Dealing with correspondence - improvement can be made in efficiency

HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPSI) has today published its report on the audit of the handling correspondence by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

HM Chief Inspector, Michael Fuller QPM, said:

"The CPS needs to ensure it is meeting its own guidance and targets for dealing efficiently with correspondence in order to promote case progression and create savings in the criminal justice system."

Summary of main audit findings:

- In 40% of cases where action could be established, correspondence had been processed within 24 hours of receipt in accordance with the target set by the CPS.
- When awaiting further information from the police, the CPS did not always monitor the response and follow up any late replies.
- Action taken as a result of correspondence was not always apparent. The record of the prosecution case in some cases was incomplete either in the form of the paper file or on the CPS electronic case management system as correspondence was not copied to both.

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. HM Chief Inspector is appointed by, and reports to, the Attorney General.
- 2 The CPS has set a target to deal with correspondence from all sources (the police, the defence, the courts and any other) within 24 hours of receipt. If necessary, if a substantive response cannot be sent within 24 hours, an acknowledgement letter should be sent. Efficient handling of correspondence is important to maintain the reputation of the organisation, to assist in proactive case progression and to provide a good service to victims and witnesses.
- 3 The audit team visited six CPS Areas and examined files that progressed to trial in the Crown Court and the magistrates' court. The audit team spoke to a range of staff in each Area and looked at the systems used in the units dealing with Crown Court and magistrates' court work to deal with correspondence.
- 4 The inspection team comprised two auditors.