



## Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate audit of the handling of discharged committal cases by the Crown Prosecution Service

### Discharged committals – CPS must improve

Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPIS) has today published its report on the audit of discharged committals.

HM Chief Inspector, Michael Fuller QPM, said:

*"The CPS needs to focus its efforts to improve the handling of cases which are committed to the Crown Court. Failure to serve timely evidence is leading to cases being discharged and ultimately these cases not being brought to justice. The cost to the CPS of these abandoned prosecutions amounts to potentially more than £600,000 per year. Performance must be improved if the CPS is to ensure that victims of crime are to receive justice."*

Summary of main inspection findings:

- Cases are not being brought back to court after they have been discharged because of a lack of action by the CPS and police.
- Cases are discharged for three main reasons: failure by the police to provide the evidential file in time; vital evidence is missing from the file when it is received by the CPS; and, late review of evidence by the CPS due to backlogs in committal file preparation.
- Victims of crime are often not kept informed about what is happening in their case. In some instances it could be months before the victim was told of a definite decision about whether the CPS was to reinstate the case.
- Better management of this type of case could save the criminal justice system a significant amount of money.
- In some cases the advice given to the police by the CPS at an early stage was insufficient or incorrect. This often led to further work being requested from the police just prior to the hearing at which the case was due to be committed to the Crown Court.

This press release should be read in conjunction with the report itself. For any queries or interviews please call Anisha Visram on 020 7210 1188.

**Notes to editors**

1. HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate 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. Cases that are to be committed to the Crown Court may be discharged by the magistrates' courts if the prosecution is not ready to proceed to committal on the date set. It is possible for the prosecution to reinstate the case later once the file has been prepared for committal.
3. Discharged committals have been examined as part of Area inspections for a number of years but this audit was the first time the topic has been subject to a dedicated thematic review. The audit team visited six CPS Areas and examined discharged committal files from eight Areas. A legal inspector examined a number of files to establish whether the discharged cases were suitable for reinstatement.
4. The inspection team comprised auditors and a legal inspector.