

## ***PRESS RELEASE***

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### **CPS HAMPSHIRE & THE ISLE OF WIGHT**

*Area heading in right direction*

Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate has today published its Report of the inspection of CPS Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

Since the last inspection in December 2000, there have been significant improvements in the handling of Crown Court casework that should provide a sound basis for raising standards even higher. Although casework in the magistrates' courts is generally satisfactory, more needs to be done to improve the quality and timeliness of the preparation for summary trial.

The Area is now much better resourced. It has re-organised into Criminal Justice Units (CJUs) co-located with the police and Trial Units (TUs) in accordance with the recommendations of the 1998 Review of the CPS (the Glidewell Review). A Special Casework Unit (SCU) has also been firmly established.

The Area contributes significantly to inter-agency work. Most relationships are strong and collaborative, particularly at senior level. The Area has also made progress in community engagement - a programme of outreach into the community has become well established.

Stephen Wooler, HM Chief Inspector of HMCPSI, said:

“The degree of progress by CPS Hampshire and the Isle of Wight since its last inspection is pleasing. It now offers a sound service. These improvements have been made against a background of demanding change in both the CPS nationally and the criminal justice system as a whole. That is to the credit of staff and managers. I am confident that provided the issues raised in the Report are addressed, the Area can achieve even more.”

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

- \* Review decisions prior to the first date of hearing are generally sound. Additional evidence or information was requested by the Area in 77.9% of those cases in the Inspector’s file sample where it should have been.
- \* Timeliness of review and case preparation for summary trials in the magistrates’ courts is weak and undermines efforts to reduce the magistrates’ courts’ cracked and ineffective trial rate. Administrative systems within three of the co-located Criminal Justice Units are not strong enough to support timely decision-making and case preparation.
- \* Decisions to discontinue proceedings are sound, but timeliness is variable and sometimes leads to cases being dropped at a late stage on the day of trial.
- \* Although the quality of review at committal is generally sound, there is scope for improvement. Inspectors found that additional evidence was requested in only 76.1% of cases in the file sample where it should have been. More could have been done to avoid judge ordered or directed acquittals in 26.5% of such cases in the file sample.
- \* Efficient case handling after committal and good liaison with the Crown Court helps to ensure cases are generally trial ready when listed.
- \* There is generally proper compliance with the prosecutor’s obligations of disclosure, but it could be timelier in the magistrates’ courts.

- \* CPS policy is correctly applied in child abuse, racial incident and youth cases, but the handling of victim withdrawals in cases of domestic violence was not always consistent.
- \* The quality of CPS advocacy is variable.
- \* There has been a major improvement in the ability of the Area to deliver the right files to magistrates' courts on time.
- \* Witness care at court is generally good, although more can be done to avoid unnecessary witness attendance in the magistrates' courts.
- \* The timeliness and quality of communications to victims about changes or discontinuance of charges can be improved.
- \* The Area has developed strengths in a number of aspects of staff management; training and development, communication, and equality and diversity. Although systems need to be developed to ensure appropriate staffing levels in each unit.

Nick Hawkins, Chief Crown Prosecutor for CPS Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, said in response to the Report:

“As the new CCP of this Area, I am delighted with the many positives highlighted in this Report. I am privileged to lead over 200 dedicated staff who will work with me to implement changes and systems to improve on the weaker areas identified.”

A copy of the Executive Summary is attached.

## Notes to Editors

1. In November 2002 HMCPSI commenced its second programme of Area inspections of the 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 either be full or intermediate depending on the circumstances.
2. The CPS Area services the area covered by the Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Constabulary.
3. CPS Hampshire employed at the time of the inspection the equivalent of 190 full time staff.
4. At the time of the inspection the Area handled 43,970 cases in the magistrates' courts and 3,843 cases in the Crown Court. In addition, pre-charge advice was given to the police in 1,698 cases.
5. The Area was the subject of inspection in November 2000 and the Report was published in March 2001.
6. The team visited the Area for two weeks in January 2004. The inspection looked at a sample of files and management information. Inspectors interviewed CPS staff at all levels and also spoke to representatives of other criminal justice agencies. Observations were made of advocates in the magistrates' courts and Crown Court, including CPS lawyers, agents and counsel.
7. The Glidewell Review mentioned in this Press Release is a reference to proposals for integrated working by the police and CPS set out in the report of the Review of the Crown Prosecution Service by Sir Iain Glidewell which was published in June 1998.
8. Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate was established as a statutory body by the Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate Act 2000, which came into effect on 1 October 2000. The Inspectorate had previously been a unit within CPS Headquarters. The Chief Inspector is appointed by, and reports to, the Attorney General.
9. For further information, please contact either Heather Minshull at HMCPSI (tel: 020 7210 1165; e-mail [heather.minshull@cps.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:heather.minshull@cps.gsi.gov.uk)) or Kate Sussex at CPS Hampshire and the Isle of Wight (tel: 023 8067 3811; e-mail: [kate.sussex@cps.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:kate.sussex@cps.gsi.gov.uk)).