

Press Notice

Follow-Up Report on CPS Hertfordshire

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01hrs
TUESDAY 14TH FEBRUARY 2006**

Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate has today published its follow up report on Hertfordshire CPS Area. This follows the full inspection report published in March 2005.

The **full inspection** found a number of strengths as well as aspects of performances requiring improvement. Casework outcomes were satisfactory and the Area was implementing the shadow charging scheme (under which the CPS gives pre-charge advice to police as a transitional arrangement before the CPS assume statutory responsibility for the decision whether to charge in all except minor cases), the Effective Trial Management Programme (ETMP) and No Witness No Justice (NWNJ). It was also one of two national pilots for the enhancement of the role of higher courts advocates (HCA). Areas for improvement resulting in recommendations were:

- the handling of unused material;
- direct communication with victims (DCV);
- engaging criminal justice partners more effectively (in particular with regard to summary trial delay);
- communications with staff;
- performance management and engaging the local community.

The **follow up visit** assessed progress against the recommendations and aspects for improvement identified in the full report. Inspectors found that since March 2005 the Area has made sound progress in addressing the recommendations relating to governance and good management. Performance management has improved and there is greater compliance with casework quality assurance procedures and better alignment with national measures.

The level of engagement of staff has increased as a result of improved communication. The Area is also now engaging more effectively with partners to reduce delay and meet key targets.

Less progress has been made on recommendations relating to undertaking the prosecution's duties of disclosure of unused material to the defence and providing information to victims about decision-making. Despite increased managerial focus on disclosure and additional training there remain some unsatisfactory aspects of performance that need to be addressed. The Area continues to have difficulty complying with the Direct Communication with Victims scheme (DCV). Letters are not sent in all appropriate cases and their timeliness is variable.

The majority of the aspects for improvement identified in the full inspection have been addressed with those where substantial progress has been made including:

- improving case progression;
- improving the analysis of adverse outcomes; and
- developing a unified system for achieving continuous improvement and encouraging staff to use the electronic case management system (CMS).

There has been less progress, however, introducing more systematic monitoring of advocacy.

The strengths identified in the full report have also been maintained. They relate to:

- the high quality of advice in cases involving serious sexual offences;
- consistently sound performance in meeting the national targets for dealing with persistent young offenders;
- the integration of CPS/police administration process; and
- the Area's strong commitment to the development of staff through support in obtaining extended qualifications.

The Area's performance against key Public Service Agreement targets has improved since the inspection and performance in other aspects remains good.

Stephen Wooler said on publishing the follow-up report:

"I welcome the progress made by CPS Hertfordshire in addressing the recommendations and aspects for improvement identified in our report. Although in some aspects the Area has not yet achieved the level of improvement that it would have wished for we are satisfied that managers recognise the issues and are committed to addressing them, providing a solid foundation for further improvement."

A copy of the follow up report is attached.

Notes to Editors

1. In 2002-04 HMCPSI undertook its second programme of inspections of the reorganised CPS. All 42 Areas in England and Wales received a full or intermediate depending on circumstances.
2. Following a risk assessment, the inspection of CPS Hertfordshire was a full one. The report of the inspection can be found on the HMCPSI website at: <http://www.hmcpsi.gov.uk>.
3. The Area serves the area covered by the Hertfordshire Constabulary. Its office is based at St. Albans, Hertford and Watford. The Area covers five magistrates' courts and two Crown Court venues. These are at St. Albans and Luton (for North Hertfordshire cases).
4. At the time of the inspection CPS Hertfordshire employed the equivalent of 88.6 full time staff (This figure includes a number of part-time staff) which had risen slightly to 88.9 by November 2005.
5. In the year ending March 2005 the Area handled approximately 17,989 cases in the magistrates' courts and 1,201 Crown Court cases were handled during the same period, advice was given to the police before charge in a further 4,253 cases.
6. Follow-up inspections are undertaken to assess the extent to which Areas have addressed recommendations and aspects for improvements, as well as monitoring strengths and casework performance.
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 the CPS Headquarters. The Chief Inspector is appointed by, and reports to, the Attorney General.
8. For further information, please contact **Heather Minshull** on 020 7210 1166 or heather.minshull@cps.gsi.gov.uk at HMCPSI.