

Press Release

Follow-Up Report on CPS Surrey

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

Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate has today published its report of its follow-up visit to CPS Surrey. This follows the full inspection conducted in September 2004 and published in March 2005.

The **full inspection** found that the quality of casework in CPS Surrey was a little below the national average in a number of aspects, particularly in respect of summary trial cases in the magistrates' courts and in complying with the prosecution's duty of disclosure. There was also a need to improve compliance with the Direct Communication with Victims (DCV) scheme to ensure that a letter was sent to the victim in all appropriate cases. The structures and governance arrangements also required some attention, as did the performance management regime. The inspection found that the CPS was making a positive contribution to inter-agency work in Surrey, and that they were striving to implement some national initiatives at the time of our visit.

Work has continued in implementing change since the full inspection; however, the Area has found it difficult to balance the need to improve services at the same time as implementing initiatives, whilst also remaining within its allocated budget. A further change to the Area structure is planned and could have a significant impact on the Area's ability to deliver the necessary improvements in the future.

The **follow up visit** found that overall only limited progress has been made against the recommendations and aspects for improvement; only two of the six recommendations have moved forward substantially as has one of the nine aspects for improvement. In some issues there has been recent activity which may bring about greater improvements in 2006. Some difficult issues arose in 2005, most of which are now either resolved or moving forward. Whilst progress has been slow there were some indications of a more proactive approach to issues in recent times, which give rise to more optimism about the future.

Progress has been made in respect of governance and performance management. Urgent attention is still needed to improve compliance to the DCV scheme. Some improvements were noted in respect of summary trial preparation and disclosure but significant issues remain to be tackled.

Other significant findings were:

- while the Area has worked hard to implement and maintain the shadow pre-charge advice scheme and the area-wide Witness Care Unit, these initiatives had yet to deliver the anticipated benefits;
- performance in respect of shared public service agreement (PSA) targets was generally positive with gradual improvements to results;
- formal case progression systems in line with the requirements of the Effective Trial Management Programme had yet to be implemented;
- there is a need to improve the use of the case management system, particularly in managing magistrates' courts cases. The accuracy of data entry needs improvement;
- the Area has improved its use of the management information system which is helping to bolster the performance management regime.

The strengths identified in the full report had been maintained, with senior CPS managers demonstrating strong commitment to the work of the Surrey Criminal Justice Board.

Stephen Wooler, HM Chief Inspector of the Crown Prosecution Service, said:

“Surrey CPS has faced challenges, some of which could not be anticipated, since the last inspection that may have hindered progress on some issues. However, many should have been progressed more effectively, particularly the low level of compliance with the Direct Communication with Victims scheme. The national initiatives implemented in Surrey have yet to deliver the expected benefits, although they are now better placed to do so in the future. There is still a need for further action in raising the level of performance in relation to both casework and management issues in Surrey”.

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 Surrey was a full one and was conducted simultaneously with a joint inspection of the criminal justice agencies. The report of the inspection can be found on the HMCPsi website at: <http://www.hmcp.si.gov.uk>.
3. The Area serves the area covered by the Surrey Constabulary. It has offices based at Guildford and in Staines and Guildford police stations. The Area covers five magistrates' courts and one Crown Court venue.
4. At the time of the inspection CPS Surrey employed the equivalent of 62.6 full time staff (This figure includes a number of part-time staff) which had fallen slightly to 62.2 by December 2005.
5. In the year ending March 2005 the Area handled approximately 11,349 cases in the magistrates' courts and 921 Crown Court cases were handled during the same period; advice was given to the police before charge in a further 3,239 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.