

## ***PRESS RELEASE***

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### **CPS WARWICKSHIRE**

Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate has today published its Report of the inspection of CPS Warwickshire.

Warwickshire is a high performing Area that makes a significant contribution to the local criminal justice system. The quality of decision-making is generally good in relation to both magistrates' courts and Crown Court casework. This is underpinned by a good internal system of performance management. The Area benchmarks itself against other CPS Areas and is consistently top in many aspects of performance. CPS Warwickshire has worked well with its partners in the criminal justice system to raise the number of offenders brought to justice; the Warwickshire Local Criminal Justice Board has exceeded its targets.

Staff within CPS Warwickshire demonstrate a high level of commitment and there is an ethos of accountability at all levels. It is the smallest CPS Area, with a correspondingly small caseload and number of staff, which can cause logistical difficulties if staff are absent through sickness or training.

CPS Warwickshire is currently working with other agencies to set up two Criminal Justice Centres in the North and South of the county, where the majority of the criminal justice agencies will be located and work together. The CPS has also collaborated to establish the Victim and Witness Partnership (VIP), which opened on 6 October 2003.

Stephen Wooler, HM Chief Inspector of HMCPSI, said:

“CPS Warwickshire has achieved high standards in its casework, but remains determined to enhance its contribution to the criminal justice system even further through close working with its partners. This is a deservedly good Report which reflects well on staff and managers alike.”

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

- \* The Area performance on ineffective trials is commendable, although it is perhaps assisted by listing policies where cases are not listed for trial until both parties are ready.
- \* Case progression in the Crown Court Unit was good and the quality of instruction to counsel had improved, but in the Magistrates’ Court Unit there was room for improvement. More robust, joint case progression in the magistrates’ courts, and with the police, would enable a reduction in adjournments. Potential benefits for the Area would include releasing resources for re-allocation to the Crown Court Unit, where staff are under considerable pressure.
- \* The handling of the prosecution’s obligation of primary disclosure was below the national average, and the processes did not comply with the Joint Operational Instructions (JOPI), but handling of secondary disclosure within the Crown Court Unit was good.
- \* Advocates observed at court were generally well prepared and the Area was commended for the quality of its recording of decisions and actions taken.
- \* The Victim and Witness Partnership provides a multi-agency approach to the warning and care of witnesses, providing information on the progress of their case. The Area also deals well with witnesses at court.

- \* CPS compliance in sending Direct Communication with Victims letters to victims, informing them of changes to their case, caused some concern.
- \* The Area has a relatively small number of staff in the Crown Court Unit compared to a more generous number in the Magistrates' Court Unit, but this has not produced a proportional rise in the quality of magistrates' courts' trial preparation.
- \* The Area has made positive steps to engage with the community, working alongside minority ethnic groups.

Mark Lynn, Chief Crown Prosecutor for CPS Warwickshire, said in response to the Report:

“I am delighted that Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of the Crown Prosecution Service has recognised the hard work and commitment of the staff in CPS Warwickshire and also the excellent results that we and our partners have achieved in Warwickshire. We are addressing the issues that have been raised in the Report.”

The Executive Summary of the Report 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. CPS Warwickshire services the area covered by the Warwickshire Police.
3. CPS Warwickshire employed, at the time of the inspection, the equivalent of 35.9 full time staff.
4. At the time of the inspection the Area handled 9,715 cases in the magistrates' courts and 457 cases in the Crown Court. In addition, pre-charge advice was given to the police in 679 cases.

5. The Area was the subject of an inspection in August 2001 and the Report was published that November.
6. The Inspection Team visited the Area for a week in March 2004. They interviewed CPS staff at all levels and also spoke to representatives of other criminal justice agencies. Observations were made of advocates, including CPS lawyers, agents and counsel, in both the magistrates' courts and the Crown Court.
7. 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.
8. 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 Mark Lynn, Chief Crown Prosecutor, at CPS Warwickshire (tel: 01926 455000; e-mail: [mark.lynn@cps.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:mark.lynn@cps.gsi.gov.uk)).