

PRESS RELEASE

Follow-Up Report on CPS Wiltshire

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01hrs TUESDAY 14TH
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Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate has today published its report of its follow up visit to CPS Wiltshire. This follows publication in February 2005 of the report of a full inspection carried out in November 2004.

The **full inspection** found that the standard of casework in Wiltshire was good in terms of the quality of both decision making and case preparation and that compliance with the prosecution duty in respect of unused material was significantly better than the national average. There were concerns, however, about the operation of the pre-charge advice scheme (under which the police and the CPS work together more closely, with the CPS assuming responsibility for the decision to charge in all except minor cases once the scheme is placed on a statutory basis) and some aspects of performance management.

The **follow up visit** assessed progress against the recommendations made and aspects for improvement identified in the full report. Inspectors found that overall the Area had made very good progress since the full inspection in relation to the recommendations and aspects for improvement but that performance still needed to be improved in respect to compliance with the scheme for direct communication with victims.

The Area had made progress towards the delivery of the three key national criminal justice initiatives, namely the assumption of responsibility for charging; the effective trial management programme and the no witness no justice initiative.

Other significant findings were:

- the shadow charging scheme (involving pre-charge advice to the police) had been re-launched with the appointment of police and CPS project managers. The degree of progress was such that the Area is well placed to migrate to statutory charging in March 2006;

- CPS Wiltshire has achieved closer working with the magistrates' courts to achieve listing arrangements which make better use of CPS resources;
- Area managers had put significant effort into enhancing their analysis of performance;
- the quality of instructions to counsel in Crown Court cases had been improved and there was full compliance with the casework quality assurance scheme.

Almost all the strengths identified in the full report had been maintained, in particular the good level of decision making and review of all aspects of its casework. Budgetary management and risk management remained a strength. However, the timeliness of the processing of cases involving persistent young offenders had declined since the full inspection. The Area has a low volume of PYO cases, and one or two long-running cases can have a substantial affect on performance. The Wiltshire Criminal Justice Board monitored progress but inter-agency youth case progression groups needed to identify the necessary remedial action to bring performance back to its previously good level.

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

“It is pleasing that the quality of casework decision making has been maintained and the performance management, including that with the Area’s criminal justice partners, have improved significantly. It will be important for CPS Wiltshire to continue to address its performance, in particular the operation of the direct communications with victims scheme yet at the same time tackle new initiatives and challenges.”

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 Wiltshire 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 Wiltshire Constabulary. Its office is based at Chippenham. The Area covers four magistrates' courts and four Crown Court venues.
4. At the time of the inspection CPS Wiltshire employed the equivalent of 48.5 full time staff (This figure includes a number of part-time staff) which had risen slightly to 51 by March 2005.
5. In the year ending March 2005 the Area handled approximately 11,354 cases in the magistrates' courts and 728 Crown Court cases were handled during the same period, advice was given to the police before charge in a further 2,103 cases, which was 14.2% of its caseload.
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.