



HM Crown Prosecution
Service Inspectorate

Business Plan

2015-16

Contents

Foreword.....	2
1 Introduction	4
2 Planned inspections.....	6
CPS Area/unit activity	9
Follow-up and re-inspection activity	9
Bespoke inspection activity	9
Thematic inspections.....	10
Joint inspection	11
3 HMCPST internal work programme 2015-16	12
Inspection development work.....	12
HMCPST supporting processes and other work.....	12
Annex A: HMCPST’s policy on inspection.....	14
Annex B: Organisation chart.....	15

Foreword

This plan sets out the key areas of work that Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPST) expects to undertake during the 2015-16 financial year and gives some background on why they are our priorities.

The National Audit Office (NAO) in their report *Inspection: A comparative study*, published in February 2015, noted the vital role played by inspection, providing Parliament and the public with the means of scrutinizing performance and showing where it can be improved. The report also acknowledged that inspection has a direct effect on performance by the inspected bodies and that the main way the inspectorates have impact is through their reports and recommendations.

Our inspections are focussed on improving the performance of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and Serious Fraud Office (SFO), holding the organisations to account and providing assurance to the Attorney General and the public. We work with the inspected agencies to identify good practice and drive improvement by undertaking a robust follow-up process, which was commended in the NAO report. We remain committed to producing high quality inspection reports.

In May 2015, the General Election will take place. The financial constraints of recent years are likely to continue, whatever the result. A further role of the inspectorate is to assess value for money and identify where financial savings can be made in the CPS, the SFO and the criminal justice system (CJS) as a whole, whilst ensuring a high quality service is still delivered in the difficult economic climate.

We continue to place importance on working with other criminal justice inspectorates on those topics where more value is added through joint inspection. Details of this work are published in a separate plan issued by the Criminal Justice Joint Inspectorate (CJJI) and are shown on page 11.

This year our priorities are:

- To carry out effective scrutiny of the work of the CPS in order to give assurance to the Attorney General
- To assist the CPS to improve the quality of service they offer the public
- To highlight aspects of CPS work where poor performance represents a risk to the public or to the reputation of the CPS or SFO
- To highlight aspects of CPS performance that represent good practice
- To develop an inspection framework and methodology for the SFO following the granting of statutory powers in 2014
- To undertake joint inspections with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation in order to identify opportunities for greater efficiency and improved outcomes in the criminal justice system as a whole
- To be flexible so that work can be undertaken at short notice if necessary

Delivering the above will be challenging, but we will be judged by our success in achieving these objectives.



Michael Fuller QPM BA MBA LLM (Hon) LLD
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

1 Introduction

Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate inspects the work carried out by the CPS and the SFO, and, by invitation, other prosecuting agencies. The purpose of our work is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of these agencies in order to enhance the quality of justice. We provide assurance to Ministers, Government and the public on the standard of the service delivered by inspections of specific CPS Areas, thematic topics, follow-up and bespoke inspections, the results of which are published in our reports. Details of the specific inspections we intend to undertake this year, under these headings, together with the joint inspections in which we are involved, are given in this document.

As an organisation, we are committed to the ten principles of public inspection, which can be found in Annex A. With the probability of continued reduced budgets, whatever the outcome of the General Election in May 2015, and the expectation on public sector organisations to deliver more for less, the 2015-16 programme will concentrate on inspection activity that can point to efficiency savings and better value for money, whilst ensuring that a quality service to the public is maintained. There is also an important role for the inspectorate in identifying good practice found during inspections.

The National Audit Office (NAO) in their report *Inspection: A comparative study*, published in February 2015, recognised the important role played by inspection. As an independent inspectorate, HMCPST is in the unique position of being able to give an objective view of the performance of the CPS and SFO and hold these organisations to account, whilst offering advice and working with them to drive improvement.

Our planning is informed by a risk-based assessment of CPS Areas and thematic topics. As in previous years, we intend to undertake follow-up inspections to assess progress made by the CPS in respect of recommendations made during earlier inspections. The NAO in their report commented positively on this aspect of our work. We have taken account of the feedback received during the consultation on a long list of potential inspection topics, which took place during December 2014 and January 2015. Although independent, we take the views of our stakeholders seriously and incorporate, as far as possible, the inspections that they consider most important when planning our programme. One piece of work that Ministers and the CPS have reported to be of value in previous years is the Annual Casework Examination Programme (ACEP). As a result, we plan to carry out a similar exercise this year, adapted to assess the CPS's new individual quality assurance process at the same time as assessing the quality of casework.

In 2014, the inspectorate published a report on the follow-up inspection of the SFO, undertaken to assess progress made in implementing the recommendations included in the inspection report published in November 2012. Both of these were carried out by invitation. However, in June 2014 Section 149 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 came into force granting HMCPST powers to inspect the SFO on a statutory basis. This year we will consolidate what we have learnt from inspecting the SFO so far, to ensure the maximum effectiveness and efficiency of future work undertaken under our new remit. We intend to develop a bespoke inspection framework to reflect the unique role and structure of the SFO. One aspect of the work on the SFO inspection methodology will be the development of a tool for identifying risk in the organisation in order to assist in the planning of inspections. This will be similar to an existing tool used for the CPS.

We continue to be committed to undertaking joint inspections with other criminal justice inspectorates on those topics that benefit from a cross-agency approach. We will take note of the recommendations in the NAO report to improve our joint working practices.

2 Planned inspections

The inspection programme for 2015-16 is tailored to our current resource levels and has been developed to reflect the needs of stakeholders and ensure that we can give assurance to both Ministers and the public. As in previous years, there will be inspection activity focusing solely on the CPS but we will also liaise with the other CJS inspectorates to undertake some joint inspection work.

HMCPST has had a follow-up inspection process in place for a number of years. The NAO report recognised this system as good practice. We will continue to undertake formal follow-up inspections, closely monitoring the progress made by the CPS in implementing all report recommendations and improving the quality of its service.

Our Annual Casework Examination Programme (ACEP) has proved successful in providing an overall assessment of the quality of CPS case files. However, the CPS has recently introduced Individual Quality Assessment (IQA) and we feel more value will be added if an evaluation of this scheme is included in our programme. Therefore the file examination programme will focus on an evaluation of the application of IQA as well as casework quality.

The inspections of the SFO undertaken by invitation have concentrated on casework. The new statutory powers we have been given provide a wider remit for future inspections to include all aspects of SFO work and governance. We will not inspect the organisation this year but will spend time researching and developing the framework and methodology for use in the future.

As always, our programme includes joint inspections. Full details of the joint work programme for all the criminal justice inspectorates has been published separately by the CJI.

1 Area/unit based inspection

i CPS Thames and Chiltern

The Area was identified from our model as high-risk. A focussed inspection of the Thames Valley unit was carried out in 2013 (published in early 2014) but we feel that there is more value now in carrying out a full inspection of the Area rather than a follow-up of the unit.

ii CPS West Midlands

The Area was identified in our risk-based assessments as a subject for inspection. Although it was visited during the course of thematic inspections, a full inspection has not been carried out since before the CPS began its refocussing exercise.

iii CPS Cymru-Wales

The Area was identified as high performing both in our risk-based assessments and also by the CPS performance monitoring. We will be undertaking an inspection to identify aspects of good practice.

2 Follow-up and re-inspection activity

i Follow-up inspection of CPS London

This is a standard follow up inspection to check progress against the recommendations made in our Area inspection report published in April 2014.

3 Bespoke inspection activity

Individual Quality Assurance (IQA)

We have conducted three rounds of ACEP, a detailed desk-based examination of case files from a cross-section of CPS Areas. These covered a range of casework aspects including pre-charge decision-making, post-charge review quality, case progression, disclosure of unused material and victim and witness care.

The exercise has been well received by the CPS and other stakeholders. However, the CPS is in the process of implementing IQA, a new system to replace the Core Quality Standards Monitoring (CQSM). We feel that more value would be added by incorporating this new quality assurance process into our casework examination so in 2015-16 ACEP will be replaced by a similar desk-based inspection of IQA.

4 Thematic inspections

i Communications with victims

This will be a review of the effectiveness of all the ways the CPS communicates with victims, such as responding to their complaints (including the Victims' Right to Review), Victim Focus Scheme, Victim Liaison Units and Direct Communication with Victims. We anticipate reporting on the clarity and consistency of application of CPS stated policies relating to victims, areas of overlap and quality of responses. This would include, as far as possible, assessing progress since our report on complaints handling in the CPS was published in January 2013.

ii Audit of witness summons

This will be an audit of the timeliness and quality of applications for witness summonses, and to what extent consideration is given to how to proceed thereafter. It will draw on work done in previous Violence Against Women and Girls-related inspections on the effectiveness of summoning victims of domestic violence.

5 Joint thematic inspections

The Criminal Justice Joint Inspection Business Plan 2015-16 has been published separately. The list of inspections that HMCPST may be involved in includes:

i Digitisation

This joint inspection will examine the extent digitisation has improved CJS processes and enhanced information-sharing. It was due to be undertaken in 2014-15 but was postponed to allow for the implementation of electronic procedures in the magistrates' courts and Crown Court as part of the CJS Efficiency Programme.

ii Stalking and harassment

This joint inspection will assess the effectiveness of police forces at identifying and managing the vulnerability and risk associated with victims of stalking and harassment, assess the effectiveness of police forces and the CPS at investigating and prosecuting these cases and identify effective practice and lessons learnt.

6 Serious Fraud Office

Work this year will concentrate on the research and development of an inspection methodology and framework for future inspections of the SFO on a statutory basis.

7 Short notice inspections

As has happened in previous years, we may be asked to undertake short notice inspections. By their very nature it is difficult to plan for them and it usually requires other inspections to be rescheduled to accommodate these requests. We will continue where appropriate to try to ensure we deliver on these, as far as available resources allow.

CPS Area/unit activity

Inspection	Timing	Background
CPS Thames and Chiltern	Early 2016	The Area was identified in our risk-based assessments as a subject for inspection. A full Area inspection will be undertaken.
CPS West Midlands	Summer 2015	The Area was identified in our risk-based assessments as a subject for inspection. A full Area inspection will be undertaken.
CPS Cymru-Wales	Summer 2015	CPS Cymru-Wales is recognised as a high-performing Area. The inspection will seek to identify aspects of good practice.

Follow-up and re-inspection activity

Inspection	Timing	Previous report published	Background
CPS London	Early 2016	April 2014	This is a standard follow-up inspection to check progress against the recommendations made in our Area inspection report published in April 2014.

Bespoke inspection activity

Inspection	Focus	Background
IQA	The consistency and effectiveness of checks on the quality of casework undertaken as Individual Quality Assessments in units selected from all CPS Areas.	The inspection will build on the current ACEP work to continue to enable continued assurance of CPS casework overall and to determine the effectiveness of IQA.

Thematic inspections

Inspection	Focus	Background
Communications with victims	<p>A review of the effectiveness of all the ways the CPS communicates with victims to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victim Focus Scheme • Victim Liaison Units • Direct Communication with Victims and • Victims' complaints (including Victims' Right to Review) 	<p>Some aspects have previously been examined as part of the inspection and follow-up of the CPS handling of complaints. The inspection will, as far as possible, assess progress on these aspects since the follow-up report was published in January 2013.</p>
	<p>We anticipate reporting on the clarity and consistency of application, areas of overlap and quality of responses.</p>	
Audit of witness summons	<p>This will be an audit of the timeliness and quality of applications for witness summonses, and to what extent consideration is given to how to proceed thereafter.</p>	<p>The audit will draw on work done in previous Violence Against Women and Girls-related inspections on the effectiveness of summoning victims of domestic violence.</p>

Joint inspection

Inspection	Focus	Background
Digitisation	<p>The inspection will examine progress made by the CJS agencies in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamlining CJS processes • Removing inconsistent practices that prevent work being easily transferred to available resources • Reducing the volume of paper produced and its physical movement between offices • Improving the quality and efficiency of shared information 	<p>The inspection was postponed from 2014-15 to allow for the implementation of processes under the CJS Efficiency programme.</p>
Stalking and harassment	<p>This joint inspection will assess:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the effectiveness of police forces at identifying and managing the vulnerability and risk associated with victims of stalking and harassment; • the effectiveness of police forces and the CPS at investigating and prosecuting these cases and • identify effective practice and lessons learnt. 	<p>A literature review of the theme has been carried out identifying key issues. Further issues have been raised by the CPS and ACPO.</p>

3 HMCPST internal work programme 2015-16

Inspection development work

The priority objectives for HMCPST in 2015-16 are:

- Maintenance and development of HMCPST's risk model
- Integration of information from the 2014-15 ACEP Programme into the risk model and inspection strategy.
- Developing a methodology to incorporate IQA into our desk-based file examination programme.
- Developing an inspection framework and methodology for future inspections of the Serious Fraud Office.
- Updating the inspection methodology handbook to take account of changes.
- Updating the templates and guidance on follow-up inspection.

HMCPST supporting processes and other work

Our budget and how it will be applied

The costs of HMCPST are met from the Estimate of the Treasury Solicitor's Department.

HMCPST's provision for 2011-12 it was £3,525,000 and for 2012-13 the figure was £3,400,000 (a reduction of 3.5% on the preceding year). The Autumn Statements of 2012 and 2013 made further changes to the budgets originally set as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review, which resulted in the budget for 2013-14 being set at £3,146,000 and £2,950,000 for 2014-15.

The budget for 2015-16 is now set at £2,950,000 (a reduction of 16.3% since 2011-12).

It will be deployed as follows:

Staff costs	£2,445,500
Recruitment/training	£20,000
Accommodation	£244,000
Travel and subsistence	£120,000
Printing/reprographics	£2,500
Other costs	£118,000
Full year budget	£2,950,000

Managing risk

It is important to have a robust risk management process in place as it provides a framework for anticipating potential problems and allows them to be dealt with in a systematic way. The way in which HMCPST manages its risks is in line with the approach commonly adopted in the public sector.

HMCPST updates its strategic and operational risk registers quarterly and also undertakes quarterly business reviews. Alongside the register a 'heat map' records how risks are progressing.

The Equality Act 2010

During 2011-12 we formulated our new Equality Objectives. These ensure that we meet our General Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010. Progress on the objectives is reviewed regularly by the Inspectorate Management Board and Equality and Diversity Co-ordinating Group. As these have now been met, new objectives have been agreed and implemented with effect from February 2015.

Annex A: HMCPST's policy on inspection

In 2003 the Government introduced ten principles of public sector inspection which were included in the Office of Public Service Reform's report *Inspecting for improvement*. These place clear requirements on inspection providers and the departments sponsoring them. HMCPST is fully committed to upholding these values and expectations and takes them into account in our strategy and planning programme.

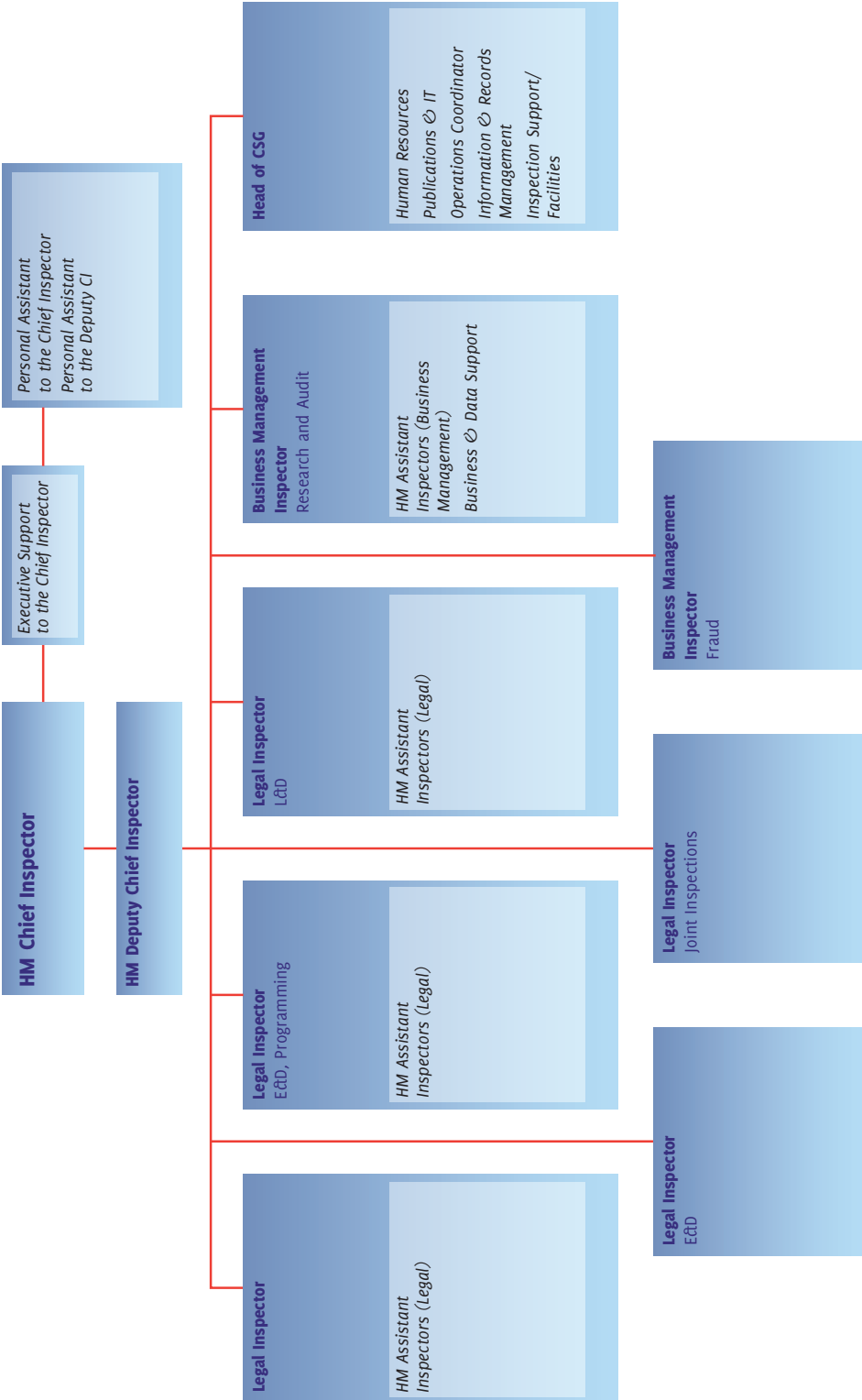
The ten principles state that public service inspection should:

- Pursue the purpose of improvement
- Focus on outcomes
- Take a user perspective
- Be proportionate to risk
- Encourage self-assessment by managers
- Use impartial evidence wherever possible
- Disclose the criteria used for judgements
- Be open about the processes involved
- Have regard to value for money including that of the inspecting body
- Continually learn from experience

We continually seek feedback on our reports and the interviews undertaken with staff of inspected bodies. We track the implementation of the recommendations we make and are conscious of the need to keep the burden of work on the inspected organisations to a minimum. The form of our inspections and practices are kept under regular review.

On 7 December 2009 the Government published its White Paper *Putting the front line first: smarter government* which announced its intention to abolish HMICA (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Court Administration) and committed to a full review of the number and work of all inspectorates in the public sector. We shall work with the other three remaining criminal justice inspectorates to ensure the best possible arrangements for inspection across the CJS.

Annex B: Organisation chart



If you ask us, we can provide a synopsis or complete version of this booklet in Braille, large print or in languages other than English.

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