



Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate
Thematic review of youth offender casework

Contributing positively to reducing offending

HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPsi) has today published its report on its thematic review of youth offender casework.

The focus of the review was on those aspects of casework which are unique to youth offenders or are particularly problematic. These included; the quality of youth offender charging decisions including pre-court disposals; the application of the 'grave crime' provisions; the quality of remand applications and the role overall of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in preventing offending.

HM Chief Inspector, Michael Fuller QPM, said:

"I am encouraged that the findings of the review show that the CPS is making a positive contribution to reducing youth offending, including deciding correctly when young people should be prosecuted and when applications should be made to restrict a suspect's liberty. But, I am concerned that in terms of quality, some aspects of youth offender casework fall short of what is expected. This must be addressed by prosecutors getting it right first time: at the charging stage. The increasing demand on resources means that advocates have less time to prepare and need to be confident that they are getting high quality guidance. There is a need to ensure that all prosecutors have a basic training in Youth Court law and practice."

Summary of main inspection findings:

- Prosecutors are supporting the aim of the youth justice system by correctly diverting young people from court.
- Prosecutors are properly circumspect when deciding whether an application should be made before conviction to restrict the liberty of young people.
- In the most serious cases prosecutors are representing correctly whether the youth should remain in the Youth Court or go to the Crown Court because the likely punishment is greater than that which the Youth Court can impose.
- More thought must be given at the charging stage to the quality of the information given to the prosecutor at court to enable them to do their job to a good standard.
- There is no assurance that the CPS Core Quality Standards Monitoring (which is the principal mechanism for assuring casework quality) provides sufficient oversight of Youth Court casework.

Notes to editors

- 1 HMCPSI is an independent statutory body established by the Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate Act 2000, which came into force on 1 October 2000. The Chief Inspector is appointed by, and reports to, the Attorney General.
- 2 This inspection included detailed scrutiny of finalised case files and extensive observations of Youth Court cases. The inspection team comprised legal inspectors and two seconded experienced CPS Youth Court prosecutors.
- 3 The court centres visited were, Birmingham, City of Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle upon Tyne, Nottingham and West London. The fieldwork took place in July 2011.