



PRESS RELEASE

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Greater Manchester Criminal Justice Area: Report of the Joint Inspection

The five criminal justice inspectorates have, today, published a joint report on how well the local criminal justice agencies in the Greater Manchester area work together to meet the needs of local people, from arrest to the point of sentence. The inspection, undertaken in November 2005, paid particular attention to three aspects:

- increasing public confidence in the criminal justice system (CJS)
- bringing offenders to justice
- reducing ineffective trials.

Inspectors looked at how well the local criminal justice agencies and other partners are working together in Greater Manchester. This area covers more than 1200 square kilometres and includes a population of over 2.5 million, boosted by a significant transient population. The area has a scale and complexity comparable with only the largest metropolitan areas in the country.

The inspection looked at things from a user's perspective, including that of people attending court as victims or witnesses of crime, and defendants in criminal cases.

Findings

Inspectors made five recommendations and identified ten further aspects for improvement. Good practice and strengths were also identified. The details can be found in the Executive Summary near the start of the published full report (a copy of which accompanies this press release). The recommendations are concerned with:

- Improving communication with delivery groups and local criminal justice groups and strengthening the accountability and monitoring mechanisms for these groups.
- Adopting a more cohesive and proactive strategy in respect of communication and public confidence.
- Adopting a coherent approach to training.
- Introducing an end-to-end approach to tackling domestic violence and hate crime.
- Enhancing the successful introduction of Witness Care Units.

In general, notable improvements in performance have been achieved in a number of areas. The development of a comprehensive service delivery plan along with clear governance and delivery arrangements underpins the significant progress the Board has made.

A significant improvement has been made in increasing the number of offences brought to justice. GMCJB clearly see it as top priority with a 28.5% increase from the baseline figure against a backdrop of reducing crime. Notable improvements have also been made in reducing ineffective trials, where performance has been significantly better than the national average.

In the year to September 2005 public confidence in the criminal justice system in the area had risen to 40%. The national average in December '05 was 43%. There are no 'quick fixes' for the issue of public confidence but there are some excellent initiatives underway across Greater Manchester which should make a positive contribution to the issue. GMCJB have also implemented positive initiatives to improve community engagement although there remains an opportunity to develop a more proactive strategy around broad communication issues.

Victims and witnesses were in the main positive about their treatment by the criminal justice agencies within the area, reflecting a genuine commitment across the agencies at all levels to enhance their treatment. Inspectors also found that defendants were treated well and their rights were respected. Issues raised with Greater Manchester about inadequate medical services in police custody facilities and a lack of interview rooms at one magistrates' court are already being addressed. The use of video links in courts, which provide financial savings as well as impacting positively on the welfare of detained persons, could be expanded further.

Overall, the Board has made commendable performance improvements to date. The issues and recommendations identified by the inspectors will enable them to build further on these improvements.

Notes for Editors

1. Local Criminal Justice Boards operate on a non-statutory basis and formally came into existence on 1 April 2003. They are responsible for delivering targets at local level to support the achievement of national objectives to improve the criminal justice system.
2. On 30 March 2004, the Prime Minister announced a new strategy to reduce the harm which prolific and other priority offenders cause to our communities and to themselves. Such offenders are a relatively small number of people who cause a disproportionate amount of crime, disorder and mayhem in our communities, damaging people's confidence and increasing feelings of unease and the fear of crime.

The strategy has three complementary parts:

- **Prevent and deter** – to stop people (overwhelmingly, young people) engaging in offending behaviours and graduating into prolific offenders
 - **Catch and convict** – actively tackling those who are already prolific offenders
 - **Rehabilitate and resettle** – working with identified prolific offenders to stop their offending by offering a range of supportive interventions; offenders will be offered the opportunity of rehabilitation or face a very swift return to the courts.
3. The joint inspection was undertaken by Her Majesty's Inspectorates of Constabulary, Crown Prosecution Service, Prisons, Probation and Court Administration, in conjunction with the Victim Support Quality & Standards Department.
 4. This joint inspection, led by HMIC, was the fourth of a series of six joint inspections planned for 2005/06. This represents a significant increase in joint inspection activity and reflects our strong commitment to working together to improve case management and to increase public confidence in the criminal justice system.
 5. Victim Support is the national charity for people affected by crime. Staff and volunteers offer free and confidential information and support at affiliated local charities, the Witness Service and Victim Supportline (0845 30 30 900).

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Or via our website at inspectors.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmic/

The websites of our partners on this inspection are as follows:

HMICA	www.hmica.gov.uk
HMCPSI	www.hmcpsi.gov.uk
HMI Prisons	www.inspectors.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmiprisons
HMI Probation	www.inspectors.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmiprobation
Victim support	www.victimsupport.org.uk