

Press Notice

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Follow-up Report on Greater Manchester CPS Area

Stephen Wooler, HM Chief Inspector of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has today published the HMCPSI follow-up report on Greater Manchester CPS Area. This follows the full inspection report published in February 2005.

The full inspection found that CPS Greater Manchester had maintained a good quality of casework, the standard of case preparation being particularly good, with performance against a range of measures better than that found nationally during the 2002-04 inspection cycle. The Area's performance for 2004-05 in other key areas such as reducing ineffective trials and achieving successful outcomes, was also better than average national performance in most respects.

The Area had implemented statutory pre-charge decision-making at the time of the inspection, and since then four witness care units had been established in co-operation with criminal justice partners, and further units were to be established by the end of the year. The Area was undertaking a substantial change programme to improve governance, efficiency and working practices.

Since February, the Area has since made good progress in addressing the recommendations made in the report which relate to governance and good management. Staff responsibilities have been reviewed and clarified. New arrangements for the delivery of various change projects, designed to increase efficiency and improve working practices, are good, and projects are now being managed using formalised techniques. These recommendations were onerous and represented a priority for the Area, and they have been dealt with well. The Area has also made substantial progress in implementing a common system for monitoring custody time limits, although it had not yet carried out its own evaluation, and there is still some work to do to ensure compliance. The recommendations regarding submission of police complaint cases and the transfer of cases between Crown Court centres have both been met.

Less progress has been made on recommendations relating to undertaking the prosecution's duties of disclosure of unused material to the defence and the introduction of the casework quality assurance scheme. The Area has more work to do to ensure that performance on disclosure is consistent, and that the casework quality assurance scheme is undertaken throughout the Area.

The majority of the aspects for improvement identified in the full inspection have been addressed, with substantial progress being made on a number, including the operation of the direct communication with victims scheme, the deployment of higher

court advocates, and the identification of training needs. There has been little progress on some, however, including monitoring discharged committals, sharing casework lessons, and the monitoring of sick absence.

The strengths identified in February 2005 have been maintained. These related to prosecutors identifying the need for and requesting additional information from police at an early stage; the handling of bail applications; the timeliness of the request for, and review of files; the handling of casework with a minority ethnic dimension, and the standard of witness care at court. The Area's performance against most key public service agreement targets has improved since the inspection, and performance in other aspects remains good.

Stephen Wooler said on publishing the follow-up report:

“I welcome the progress made by the Area in addressing the recommendations and aspects for improvement identified in our report. I am satisfied that the Area now has in place the governance structures to ensure that the outstanding issues will be tackled. I am confident that the hard work of the staff and managers of the Greater Manchester CPS will continue, and that they will build on what they have achieved so far“

A full copy of the follow-up report is attached and is available on HMCSI website at www.hmcsi.gov.uk/reports/regional2.shtml. The earlier full inspection report also remains available on that website at www.hmcsi.gov.uk/reports/GtMan0205Rep.pdf.

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 Greater Manchester was a full one.
3. The Area serves the area covered by Greater Manchester Police. It has seven offices based in Manchester (two), Bolton, Hyde, Oldham, Rochdale and Wigan. The Area covers ten magistrates' courts and four Crown Court venues.
4. At the time of the inspection CPS Greater Manchester employed the equivalent of 435.3 full time staff (This figure includes a number of part-time staff).
5. In the year ending September 2004 the Area handled approximately 90,292 cases in the magistrates' courts and 8,892 Crown Court cases were handled during the same period, advice was given to the police before charge in a further 17,448 cases, which was 16.2% of its caseload.
6. The recommendations made in the inspection report on CPS Greater Manchester related to arrangements for the governance and good management of the Area, staff deployment and responsibilities, casework quality assurance, the handling of police complaint cases, the transfer of cases between Crown Court centres, disclosure of unused material, and the handling of cases in which custody time limits applied.
7. 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.
8. The national initiatives referred to in the follow-up report are:

- (i) Pre-charge decision-making (pre-charge advice to police)

The Criminal Justice Act 2003 took forward the recommendations of Lord Justice Auld in his Review of the Criminal Courts, so that the CPS will determine the decision to charge offenders in the more serious cases. Shadow charging arrangements and the statutory scheme is having a phased roll out across priority Areas and subsequently all 42 Areas.

- (ii) No Witness: No Justice

This is a project to improve witness care: through the establishment of witness care units. The aim is to give witnesses the support and the information that they need from the inception of an incident through to the conclusion of a criminal prosecution. It is a partnership of the CPS and the Association of Chief Police Officers and also involves Victim

Support and the Witness Service. Jointly staffed Witness Care Units are being introduced into all Areas by December 2005.

(iii) Direct communication with victims (DCV)

This is part of the enhanced role of the CPS in relation to victims of crime. When a charge is to be discontinued or substantially reduced the CPS provides a written explanation to the victim of the reasons for this.

(iv) Public service agreement (PSA) targets

Objectives relating to reducing crime and the fear of crime were agreed by the Home Office, the Department for Constitutional Affairs and the CPS. These shared targets relate to increasing the numbers of offenders brought to justice, reducing the rate of ineffective trials, dealing with persistent young offenders from arrest to sentence within 71 days, and increasing public confidence in the effectiveness of criminal justice agencies in bringing offenders to justice.

9. 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.
10. For further information, please contact Michael Fogg (telephone 020 7201 1143; email: Michael.Fogg@cps.gsi.gov.uk) at HMCPSI.