

***HM CROWN PROSECUTION SERVICE***  
***INSPECTORATE***

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**CPS HAMPSHIRE AND THE ISLE OF WIGHT**

HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate has today published the report of its inspection of CPS Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

Inspectors found much to commend in CPS Hampshire and Isle of Wight, despite substantial problems that need continuing high priority and attention. Inspectors recognised that the Area had made great efforts to improve its performance across the board.

CPS Hampshire and the Isle of Wight appears historically to have had a lower proportion of resources allocated to it than most other CPS Areas. Some perceive that this has contributed to a low standard of performance in some respects. The difficulties facing the Area were recognised and much work has been done to alleviate this and other problems, but representatives of other criminal justice agencies still perceive that there has been little or no improvement in the standard of work. Some recorded measures (originating from other agencies as well as the CPS) indicate that there has been significant improvement in many respects, and the other agencies' critical view of the local CPS may be coloured by a frustration built up over a long period of time of having to cope with poor performance. This will only be overcome

by good performance being achieved consistently at all levels. Good progress has been made in many problem areas, but there is still clearly a lot that needs to be done.

Despite these difficulties, overall the relationships with other agencies are good, and this has enabled some significant successes to be achieved. The implementation of the initiatives arising from the recommendations in the Review of Delay in the Criminal Justice System (the Narey report) was assisted by the introduction of fast-track files some considerable time before, thus easing the stress of transition. The restructuring into criminal justice units and trial units is progressing very well. The joint work on speeding up youth justice has also been particularly successful.

Overall the standard of decision-making was good. In contrast, there was concern about the actual performance in court, with problems besetting the effective progress and presentation of some cases in both the magistrates' courts and the Crown Court. A number of essentially sound cases were being lost through an inability to deal with issues that arise. Poor continuing review and case management were often at fault, as were failures in basic administrative functions of file tracking and delivery. These were undermining a consistent standard of decision-making.

The Area has gained considerable standing with its partners for its clear determination to secure improvement, but it has yet to gain their full confidence in its ability to deliver a high quality service.

Stephen Wooler, HM Chief Inspector of the CPS, said:

“CPS Hampshire and the Isle of Wight has substantially improved its performance in some important aspects of casework handling and at the same time carried through a programme of major structural change. There remains a need to improve some of its work in both the magistrates' courts and the Crown Court.

It is important to recognise the effective role which it has played in working with others to reduce delays in the criminal justice system locally, in particular in relation to dealing with persistent young offenders. It has also worked hard

to improve the treatment of victims and witnesses through its work with the Witness Service.”

The inspection was carried out during a period of intensive change in both the CPS and the criminal justice system. The Area has implemented the Narey initiative to reduce delays in the criminal justice system and has changed from geographically based teams to functional units and is now moving into trial units and criminal justice units, where CPS and police staff will be co-located.

The Area had undertaken particularly effective work with other criminal justice agencies in relation to youth justice. Good practice has been developed and the Area dealt with persistent young offenders in an average time of 71 days (compared to the national average of 95 days) in both the second and third quarters of 2000. The Area therefore achieved the government’s target of halving the time between arrest and sentence of persistent young offenders from an average of 142 days to 71 days. (Annual statistics, which include additional data, published after the report was printed, have revised the figures to 78 days, but this nevertheless remains creditable performance for an Area of this size.)

Specific findings by the Inspectorate include:

- \* The quality of advice provided to police was good, but its timeliness needs to be improved;
- \* Good quality review needs to be backed by effective continuing review;
- \* The formation of dedicated Crown Court Units should improve the standard of committal preparation;
- \* Higher standards of preparation of cases for trial in the magistrates’ courts are required to reduce the number of cracked and ineffective trials - joint analysis with the Magistrates’ Courts Service is being undertaken in order to help bring about improvements;

- \* Some basic aspects of performance require priority attention and thereafter consistent standards need to be maintained to overcome the negative expectations of others within the CJS;
- \* The Area has taken positive steps to improve the of disclosure of unused material to the defence;
- \* The overall standard of advocacy in the magistrates' courts and Crown Court is satisfactory, but needs to be supported by better systems of preparation in the office;
- \* Good work is undertaken in relation to victims and witnesses and specifically with the Witness Service;
- \* Positive efforts have been made to carry forward its aims on equality, race and disability issues.

Stephen Wooler, HM Chief Inspector of the CPS added:

“ I hope that the recommendations in the report will assist the Area to continue to improve its performance. CPS Hampshire and the Isle of Wight has the foundations and potential to build upon the improvement already achieved.”

Responding to the report, the Chief Crown Prosecutor, Roger Daw, said:

“I am grateful to HMCPSI for their detailed report. It not only confirms the action that we need to take to continue to improve the quality of service that we provide for the communities that we serve, but also properly recognises the successes that we have achieved to date. I am delighted that the hard work of the staff has been acknowledged.

CPS Hampshire and the Isle of Wight has made rapid strides over the last two years in improving its performance. With additional funding available from

this April, my senior managers and I are confident that we can continue to build on the progress that we have made and are continuing to make.

The Inspectorate's recommendations have been fully accepted and we have already drafted an Action Plan to set out how we intend to meet the challenges that they present."

### **Notes to the Editors**

1. This is the latest report of the HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate in the current cycle of inspections based on the 42 Area structure adopted by the CPS on 1 April 1999. The CPS is a national service, but operates on a decentralised basis with each Area led by a Chief Crown Prosecutor who enjoys substantial autonomy.
2. CPS Hampshire and the Isle of Wight has its offices in Eastleigh. On 30 November 2000, the Area employed the equivalent of 145.7 full time staff (the CCP, the Area Business Manager, 3 Branch Crown Prosecutors and 56.1 other prosecutors, 54.8 caseworkers and 22.8 administrative staff).
3. In the year 2000, the Area dealt with cases involving 41,980 defendants in the magistrates' courts and 4269 defendants in the Crown Court. It provided advice to the police before charge in respect of another 1,043 defendants.
4. Before visiting the Area, the team of inspectors examined a total of 431 cases of various types. The team visited the Area for a total of three weeks from 27 November to 15 December 2000. It interviewed staff of all levels, as well as criminal law practitioners and local representatives of other criminal justice agencies in the Area. Inspectors observed advocates, including CPS lawyers, designated caseworkers and agents in the magistrates' courts, and counsel prosecuting on behalf of the CPS in the Crown Court.
5. The CPS Inspectorate was set up in 1996. The Inspectorate became independent from the CPS when The Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate Act 2000 was implemented on 1 September 2000. The inspection process examines all aspects of Area performance focusing on the casework decision-making and casework handling process along with management and operational issues.
6. For further information, please contact either the Enquiry Point at HMCPS Inspectorate (tel: 020 7210 1197) or CPS Hampshire and the Isle of Wight (tel: 02380 673800).