

***HM CROWN PROSECUTION SERVICE
INSPECTORATE***

PRESS RELEASE

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CPS SOUTH WALES

HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate has today published its report of its inspection of CPS South Wales. The inspectors found that casework performance of the Area is fundamentally sound. The standard of advocacy among prosecutors varied. Most were fully competent and some were very good. The inspectors noted effective initiatives to reduce delays through the number of contested cases that did not proceed at the last minute. Several other aspects of its casework handling require improvements, notably the recording of review decisions and the disclosure of material not used by the prosecution but which might assist the defence case.

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

“This report shows that CPS South Wales has both strengths and weaknesses. It is to the credit of the Area that its performance has remained fundamentally sound despite the pressures faced by staff and the extent of the change programme within the CPS as a whole including South Wales. Senior managers have a clear vision as to where improvements are required and how they wish to tackle them. Once the weaknesses identified in the report are addressed, CPS South Wales will be well placed to offer a consistently high standard of service to the criminal justice system as well as to victims and witnesses.”

The inspectors found that the Area was well managed. There is a well-developed long-term plan to improve performance and the Area is taking appropriate steps to give effect to the recommendations of the Glidewell Report, for restructuring the Service into functional rather than geographical units. The Area works closely with local minority ethnic communities as part of its Equality and Diversity plan which the inspectors thought was particularly impressive. There is good co-operation with other criminal justice agencies at both operational and strategic level. However, work needs to be done to secure improvements in police file quality

The inspectors made a number of recommendations and suggestions on issues which included improving the way that decisions are recorded on case files, improving witness care, reviewing the handling of prosecution disclosure obligations and monitoring of the timeliness and quality of several key processes and standards.

Responding to the report, the Chief Crown Prosecutor for South Wales, Huw Heycock, said:

“The South Wales Area readily welcomes the Inspectorate’s thorough report, its appreciation of what is being achieved locally and the recommendations to improve performance. Our aim is to take early action to fully implement the recommendations so that the service provided to the public can be further enhanced.”

Specific findings of the Inspectorate included:

- The quality of review is sound overall but at times more attention to detail is required.
- The recording of decision-making requires attention.
- The Area needs to develop a system whereby prosecutors can learn from unsuccessful prosecutions.

- The compliance with the obligations on the disclosure of unused material is inconsistent and sometimes weak.
- Dedicated youth specialists have assisted in the reduction of delays in the prosecution of young offenders.
- The effective use of self-assessment techniques in relation to the review and monitoring of service delivery.
- The Area has a good relationship with the local criminal justice agencies and with the local community.
- The development and implementation of an Equality and Diversity Plan that actively involves local community groups.

Notes to Editors

1. This is the latest report of HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate in the new cycle of inspections based on the 42 Area structure introduced 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 South Wales has its headquarters in Cardiff and its boundaries are co-terminous with the other criminal justice agencies in the area covered by the South Wales Police. It employs the equivalent of 175.1 full time staff. It has three Branches. South Glamorgan Branch is based in Cardiff and the Mid and West Glamorgan Branches are based at Merthyr Tydfil and Swansea respectively.
3. In the year ending 31 March 2000, the Area dealt with cases involving 27,285 defendants in the magistrates' courts and 2559 defendants in the Crown Court. It provided advice to the police before charge in respect of another 1476 cases.
4. The CPS Inspectorate was set up in 1996. The Inspectorate has recently become independent from the CPS and became HM CPS Inspectorate on 1 October 2000 pursuant to the Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate Act 2000. The inspection process examines all aspects of Area performance focusing on the casework decision making and casework handling processes along with management and operational issues.
5. For further information, please contact either Jo Crossley at HMCPSI (tel: 020 7210 1179) or Gordon Jones at CPS South Wales (tel: 029 2080 3907).