

Press Notice

Follow-Up Report on CPS Staffordshire

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01hrs
TUESDAY 14TH FEBRUARY 2006**

Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate has today published the HMCPSI follow-up inspection of Staffordshire CPS Area. This follows the full inspection in August 2004 (report published December 2004).

The **full inspection** found that the quality of casework decision making in CPS Staffordshire was very good and compliance with the prosecution duty in respect of the disclosure of unused material was consistently good. The Chief Crown Prosecutor had a clear vision for CPS Staffordshire and the Area was about to embark on a structural review to meet the changing needs of the business and to facilitate the implementation of a number of national initiatives. However, that inspection did also identify that the Area needed to consider the effectiveness of its resource planning arrangements and review its culture with regard to some aspects of leadership, staff involvement and recognition.

The **follow up visit** notes that specific steps have been taken to address most of the recommendations and aspects for improvement directed at the management of the Area. However, progress in relation to casework matters has been slower in some respects with associated slippage in terms of delivering good casework outcomes with the number of offences brought to justice (a shared target with other criminal justice agencies) standing at an increase of 11.3% over the 2002 baseline compared with 19.2% at the time of the inspection. On the positive side, the ineffective trial rate (cases listed for a contested hearing which do not proceed to trial on the appointed day) had improved from 23.8% to 19.9% in the magistrates' courts and 19.3% to 9.9% in the Crown Court.

The positive findings by the inspectors include:

- the proposed structural review has commenced with the Area moving from functional units to geographical units in the North and South of the county;

- a more systematic approach to human resource planning has been established;
- systems and processes have been introduced to ensure that budgetary and staff changes can be managed effectively;
- cultural issues within the organisation identified during the course of the inspection have been addressed and an internal communication and cultural review carried out in January 2005 showed positive results;
- the Area has made substantial progress in developing a strategy for staff recognition.

Casework matters identified by inspectors as requiring further work related to the monitoring and managing of the quality of police files which needs to be grasped and reinvigorated if cases are to be handled and progressed effectively. There is evidence that extra work and duplication is taking place in many cases as evidence has had to be “chased”. This is also important in the context of the charging initiative. The Area also needs to focus on ensuring that it identifies all cases falling within the direct communication with victims scheme and therefore require a letter to be written to the victim. Although this has received some consideration, further improvement is necessary.

Stephen Wooler, HM Chief Inspector of the Crown Prosecution Service, said:

“The Area has worked hard to implement key recommendation in our 2004 report. The establishment of sound resource planning and a palpable cultural shift have had positive impact. It is important to complement that improvement with action to ensure that slippage in casework results is swiftly checked”.

A copy of the follow-up report is attached.

Notes to Editors

1. In 2002-04 HMCSI 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 Staffordshire was a full one. The report of the inspection can be found on the HMCSI website at: <http://www.hmcsi.gov.uk>.
3. The Area serves the area covered by the Staffordshire Constabulary. Its offices are based at Stafford and Newcastle-under-Lyme. The Area covers six magistrates' courts and two Crown Court venues.
4. At the time of the inspection CPS Staffordshire employed the equivalent of 122.6 full time staff (This figure includes a number of part-time staff) which had risen slightly to 123.3 by March 2005.
5. In the year ending March 2005 the Area handled approximately 26,528 cases in the magistrates' courts and 1,857 Crown Court cases were handled during the same period, advice was given to the police before charge in a further 4,521 cases, which was 13.7% of its caseload.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. For further information, please contact **Heather Minshull** on 020 7210 1166 or heather.minshull@cps.gsi.gov.uk at HMCSI.