

Press Notice

Follow-Up Report on CPS Sussex

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

Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate has today published its report of its follow up visit to CPS Sussex. This follows publication in September 2004 of the report of a full inspection carried out in June 2004.

The **full inspection** found that CPS Sussex staff were motivated and led by managers who were respected within the Area and by their criminal justice partners. Some aspects of casework were good, including the quality of decision-making at the initial review stage and the work done in cases involving persistent young offenders. However, inspectors found that more needed to be done to improve the preparation of summary trials and some aspects of Crown Court cases.

The **follow up visit** assessed progress against the recommendations made and aspects for improvement identified in the full report. Inspectors found that overall the Area had made very good progress since the inspection but that performance still needed to be improved in respect to compliance with the scheme for direct communication with victims (DCV) and there were still concerns about the quality of some of the instructions to counsel and the monitoring of custody time limits.

The Area had made progress towards the delivery of the three key national criminal justice initiatives, namely the assumption of responsibility for charging; the effective trial management programme and the no witness no justice initiative.

Other significant findings were

- summary trial case management systems in the Criminal Justice Units had improved significantly with the appointment of case progression officers;
- progress had been made in the Trial Units with appropriate systems to monitor timeliness and compliance in respect of orders made at Crown Court case management hearings;

- adverse case reports were now of a good quality, identified victim and witness issues and where more could have been done by either the CPS or the police to avoid the outcome;
- compliance with the DCV scheme still needed to be improved, to ensure that a letter was sent to the victim in all appropriate cases. The timeliness of letters sent out under the scheme varied considerably across the units; and
- substantial progress had been made in reviewing the effectiveness of the processes in the units that were co-located with the police, with a number of recommendations to improve performance put to, and accepted by, the Area Management Team;

Almost all the strengths identified in the full report had been maintained, in particular the quality of the application of the Code tests at initial review and when deciding whether a case should be discontinued. The timeliness of the processing of cases involving persistent young offenders (PYOs) had, however, declined significantly. The Area had identified a number of factors which had contributed to this, including an increase in Crown Court cases involving PYOs, more cases being adjourned to tie-in with other proceedings and the impact of deferred sentences.

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

“It is pleasing that the quality of casework decision making has been maintained and that performance in the management of magistrates’ courts and Crown Court cases has improved significantly. It will be important for CPS Sussex to continue to address those aspects of performance in respect of which there has been no or limited progress, in particular the operation of the direct communication with victims scheme.”

A copy of the follow-up report is attached.

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 Sussex was a full one. The report of the inspection can be found on the HMCPSI website at: <http://www.hmcpsi.gov.uk>.
3. The Area serves the area covered by the Sussex Police. It has offices based at Brighton, Crawley, Chichester and Eastbourne. The Area covers nine magistrates' courts and three Crown Court venues.
4. At the time of the inspection CPS Sussex employed the equivalent of 129 full time staff (This figure includes a number of part-time staff) which had fallen slightly to 122 by March 2005.
5. In the year ending March 2005 the Area handled approximately 21,625 cases in the magistrates' courts and 1,906 Crown Court cases were handled during the same period, advice was given to the police before charge in a further 10,893 cases, which was 31.10% 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 HMCPSI.