

Inspection of CPS Avon & Somerset follow-up Report

Introduction

1. This report details the findings of Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPISI) arising from the follow-up progress visit to CPS Avon and Somerset on 25 and 26 October 2005.
2. The Inspectorate carried out a full inspection of CPS Avon and Somerset in September 2004 and the report of that inspection was published in January 2005. The report made eight recommendations, which set out the steps necessary to address significant weaknesses relevant to important aspects of performance. In addition, the inspection identified eight strengths and 15 aspects for improvement (AFIs).
3. The purpose of this visit was to assess the Area's progress against the recommendations and AFIs contained in the report. We also evaluate whether the strengths in performance are still present. We comment in detail on the progress made against our recommendations and summarise the steps taken by the Area to address AFIs. We also summarise the current position in relation to strengths.
4. The eight recommendations in respect of which we assessed progress were:
 - R1** Unit Heads ensure that appropriate decisions are made at each stage of handling prospective discontinuance cases (paragraph 4.19).
 - R2** Unit Heads ensure timely and pro-active initial and continuing review in all cases and consistent use of processes in case management (paragraph 4.35).
 - R3** The Area reviews its current custody time limit (CTL) systems to rectify weaknesses and, where necessary, provide training and guidance to staff (paragraph 4.68).
 - R4** The Chief Crown Prosecutor (CCP) and Area Business Manager (ABM) develop a formal staffing strategy that identifies the resources required for each unit, taking account of the agreed responsibilities and levels of court deployment of each team (paragraph 8.7).
 - R5** The CCP and ABM ensure that only appropriate transactions are allocated to prosecution costs codes 3010 and 3020 (paragraph 9.4).
 - R6** The CCP and ABM ensure that robust systems are implemented to manage counsels' fees (paragraph 9.10).
 - R7** The CCP ensures transparency and appropriate consultation across staff in strategic decision-making (paragraph 11.3).

R8 The CCP should:

- design a framework for systematic identification and implementation of improvements in both casework and administrative processes;
- draw up Terms of Reference governing the work of the management groups, with clear definition of responsibilities and inter-relationships;
- enhance and increase the engagement and responsibilities of the Level D managers in management (paragraph 13.10).

Methodology

5. At the same time as the follow-up inspection, we conducted a separate Overall Performance Assessment (OPA) of the Area. The OPA report will be published once all 42 CPS Areas have been assessed; this is likely to be in February/March 2006. The outcome of the programme of OPAs will enable the Inspectorate to plan its future Area Effectiveness Inspections based on risk assessments and thus target those Areas with the greatest need. Information gathered from the OPA in the Area has also informed our views on the progress that has been made and used in this follow-up report.
6. The Area supplied a comprehensive range of documents relating to management information and performance data in connection with the OPA which also provided evidence of the progress that had been made since the inspection. These included the Area Action Plan to implement the report's recommendations and aspects for improvement as well as minutes of internal meetings and meetings with other agencies, and protocols and agreements relating to Area initiatives and projects. We analysed the information that was received.
7. We examined 31 files, selected across the units to look at the progress against the recommendations relevant to discontinuance, continuing review and custody time limits (CTLs). We also looked at these files in order to assess whether the strengths we had found were maintained.
8. During our visit we interviewed the CCCP, the ABM, the heads of the Bristol Crown Court TU, Southern Combined Unit and Northern Criminal Justice Unit and a Team Leader.

Background to the Area

9. The inspection report noted that the Area had generally improved its casework against a background of change, principally the introduction of shadow charging and the migration in July 2004 to the statutory scheme. It had also succeeded in building upon its strengths which lay in its strong commitment to the ASCJB and working co-operatively and dynamically with its criminal justice partners to improve casework and the operation of the criminal justice system. It also demonstrated a firm commitment to community engagement.

10. The report observed, however, that more needed to be done in some key measures of casework and some aspects of performance management, deployment and staffing strategy, financial controls and leadership. Of particular significance was the need for senior managers to achieve within the Area, by improving internal communications and increasing staff confidence, the same success as had been established with its external partners.
11. Since the last inspection, the process of change has continued with the Area progressing initiatives such as statutory charging and No Witness No Justice (NWNJ) whilst achieving improvements in many aspects of performance. Area managers are currently reviewing the Area structure in the light of these initiatives to determine the best model to allow the Area to deliver business in a rapidly changing environment which places greater emphasis on working with criminal justice partners. This is made more problematic by the current uncertainty over reform of police forces and the possibility of consequent realignment of CPS Areas.

Overview

12. The Area has produced a comprehensive Action Plan to address the recommendations and AFIs. Progress has been better in some rather than others. Procedures have been implemented to improve the review process and statutory charging is now embedded within the Area. Systems for monitoring and analysing case outcomes and casework quality are more structured. However, the Area has not yet fully realised the benefits of these procedures. Although review is more rigorous and timely, discontinuance still remains an aspect for concern particularly in respect of Crown Court cases which have been the subject of a pre-charge decision.
13. Custody time limits also continue to give cause for concern despite improvements to, and greater consistency in, the Area system. The Area has reviewed its staffing model and is currently restructuring but the process still needs to be informed by a more detailed analysis of lawyer and Designated Caseworker (DCW) deployment. There are still issues in relation to the misuse of accounts codes for counsel dealing with cases in the magistrates' courts, although performance in respect of counsels' fees generally has improved.
14. Staff concerns about the openness and accountability of senior managers have been addressed to some extent and staff are more widely consulted on, and more involved in implementing, change. Changes to the management structure have allowed Level D team leaders greater responsibility in management at the more strategic level. Staff communication has improved although there is not yet a consistent approach to communication within the Area.

Performance against PSA targets

15. Key performance results for the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) are contained in the table below.

| PSA targets | Original inspection | Follow-up |
|--|---------------------|--------------------|
| Offences Brought to Justice against baseline | +11.9% | +6.9% (2004-05) |
| Ineffective trial rate - magistrates' courts | 17.1% | 16.1% (2004-05) |
| Ineffective trial rate - Crown Court | 19.2% | 17.5% (2004-05) |
| Public confidence | | 40% (2004-05) |
| PYOs | 55 days | 57 days |

* For ineffective trial rates, lower is better

Implementation of the recommendations

Recommendation 1 - Unit Heads ensure that appropriate decisions are made at each stage of handling prospective discontinuance cases.

16. **Limited progress.** The Area handling of discontinuance had been a concern for some time and had been subject of a recommendation in a previous inspection report. Although discontinued cases were monitored within the Casework Quality Assurance scheme (CQA), there were inconsistent approaches to monitoring within units. Much of the concern over the handling of cases related to a less than robust approach to review in particular in relation to obtaining further information or evidence at an early stage and also in allowing cases to drift when decisions to discontinue could have been made earlier.
17. As a result of the recommendation, the Area has introduced a number of measures to improve performance. All decisions to discontinue cases subject of a pre-charge decision now require authorisation by a team leader. Team leaders also analyse all discontinued cases and discuss the results in team meetings. Regular and structured joint performance meetings are now being held with the police to examine discontinued cases (amongst other aspects of performance).

18. The Area has yet to see any substantial improvements from these measures. The overall discontinuance rate in all cases at the time of the last inspection was 12.5%. The rate for the year ending March 2005 was 11.5% in respect of magistrates' courts cases. Judge ordered acquittals in the Crown Court represented 15.1% of Crown Court case outcomes. Of greater concern are the results in respect of pre-charge decision cases. The magistrates' courts discontinuance rate for 2004-05 was 12.5%, although better than the national average of 16.3%. The rate discontinuance rate for Crown Court cases was 19.6% against a national average of 14.6%.
19. The Area holds joint performance meetings with the police, although these are less structured in the north than in the south. The Area is hoping for improvements as a result of the measures implemented and there are positive emerging signs of improvement to the Crown Court discontinuance rate.

Recommendation 2 - Unit Heads ensure timely and pro-active initial and continuing review in all cases and consistent use of processes in case management.

20. **Substantial progress.** The report noted a number of shortcomings in respect of the approach to reviewing cases in the initial and later stages. In cases examined during the full inspection where it was appropriate to request further information or evidence at initial review, reviewing lawyers failed to do so in almost half of them. There were similar failings in taking timely steps to improve cases as part of continuing review. This was particularly apparent in some adverse outcomes where action taken earlier could have avoided the eventual result. Action was required to address these issues.
21. The Area set about doing this in a number of ways. These included establishing improved feedback mechanisms and development opportunities for lawyers, carrying out more comprehensive and better recorded reviews, more consistent case ownership and greater casework support in Crown Court cases, and a more structured case progression function in accordance with the Effective Trial Management Programme (ETMP). This was to be supported by the delivery of training in key topics including the new disclosure provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 2003.
22. The Area has made substantial progress in some of these aspects. CQA is used to assess casework quality and provide feedback to lawyers and team leaders, although the number of files monitored is less than the nationally recommended sample of one file per lawyer per month. Unit Heads compile quarterly reports on adverse outcomes which are available to all lawyers and caseworkers. Development opportunities for lawyers have improved because of a more structured policy of rotation and secondment between units.
23. Review is generally more timely and robust, principally because the statutory charging scheme is now well embedded and implementation of ETMP has ensured that cases progress more quickly and are generally trial ready.

24. Because of competing priorities, the Area has not delivered training on the disclosure provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (CJA) and has no immediate plans for doing so. This should be a priority. Training has been delivered on other aspects of the CJA – bad character and hearsay evidence and dangerous offenders.

Recommendation 3 - The Area reviews its current custody time limit systems to rectify weaknesses and, where necessary, provide training and guidance to staff.

25. **Limited progress.** At the time of the inspection, the Area had experienced six recent CTL failures. Action had been taken to address the issues arising from the first of these but the later failures required more direct action. There have been no other failures since the time of the inspection. Inspectors also noted further problems in respect of file endorsements in CTL cases and discovered one incorrectly calculated review date which had not been detected by a management check. Different monitoring systems were used by the units and there was one example of a CTL file not being monitored.
26. Following the inspection, changes have been made to CTL systems and the Area system complies for the most part with national guidance. Staff have been provided with training, both on the national essential guide to CTLs and the new Area system. A survey of the system to monitor compliance was carried out in July 2005. Weekly checks of CTL logs are done to provide assurance that the CTL system in each unit is effective and monitoring is up to date.
27. There remain some concerns, however. Although monitoring logs were being correctly maintained, a check of files during the follow-up showed some unclear endorsements and one case being unnecessarily monitored following a guilty plea. In another case, the expiry date had been wrongly calculated, apparently as a result of a misunderstanding about the effect of a prosecution appeal against the grant of bail.
28. More positively, the Area has gained the involvement of the Crown Court in monitoring expiry dates, by court staff sending reminders when expiry dates are imminent. There are no similar arrangements with the magistrates' courts in respect of agreeing or monitoring expiry dates.

Recommendation 4 - The CCP and ABM develop a formal staffing strategy that identifies the resources required for each unit, taking account of the agreed responsibilities and levels of court deployment of each team.

29. **Limited progress.** At the time of the last inspection, the Area was experiencing some difficulty in identifying the optimum staffing levels for each unit, a problem compounded by the need to implement statutory charging. The Area had based its considerations on the number of prosecutors required to provide minimum cover in respect of magistrates' courts sessions. However, other considerations meant that agent usage was increasing

because of the need to train new lawyers, the use of DCWs was variable and Higher Court Advocate (HCA) deployment had decreased both in terms of the number of sessions and work undertaken.

30. The Area response to this has been to develop a resource model to apply to each unit to show staff numbers, in-house court coverage by lawyers and DCWs and the use of agents. It is currently restructuring taking into account this model but the restructuring still needs to be informed by a more comprehensive analysis of deployment requirements to meet the Area's court and charging obligations.
31. DCW usage is still below the national average (7.3% against 9.3%), although there are encouraging current negotiations for more DCW courts. HCA deployment and savings from HCA sessions is increasing, although savings are, again, still below the national average (£201 for the last quarter of 2004-05 against a national average of £220). Agent usage has reduced somewhat although the Area is taking action in the current year to limit usage further by allocating money for agents to units on an incremental basis.

Recommendation 5 - the CCP and ABM ensure that only appropriate transactions are allocated to prosecution costs codes 3010 and 3020.

32. **Limited progress.** The Area was not complying with guidelines regulating the use of counsel for special cases in the magistrates' courts and was debiting fees to the wrong account codes in some instances. The codes (3010 and 3020 – now 8002 and 8003) relate to use of counsel in complex cases, whereas the Area was using the account for almost all full day trials dealt with by counsel regardless of their nature.
33. The Area response was to set team leaders an objective to comply with guidelines and to implement a new form to be used when allocating cases appropriate for the account. There has been some improvement since then, but a number of cases are still being incorrectly allocated to counsel under this code which could be handled by in-house lawyers or agents.

Recommendation 6 - The CCP and ABM ensure that robust systems are implemented to manage counsels' fees.

34. **Achieved.** Area systems for payment of prosecution costs were not effective. Limited numbers of staff with the appropriate knowledge for processing counsels' fees combined with other issues to develop a significant backlog of unpaid fees. Work had already started to reduce the backlog at the time of the inspection but much more needed to be done.
35. Since then the position has changed greatly and performance on fees expenditure is good. The Area's unit cost for graduated fees in the first quarter of 2005-06 was £551 which is well below the national average of £680. Systems for handling high costs cases are also sound.

Recommendation 7 - The CCP ensures transparency and appropriate consultation across staff in strategic decision-making.

36. **Substantial progress.** A significant number of staff felt that decisions taken by the Chief Crown Prosecutor's Advisory Group (CCPAG) did not always take sufficient account of their needs or were sufficiently well explained. Similarly, many staff felt that they were unable to influence local policy or the implementation of national initiatives. The 2004 Staff Survey also indicated that some staff felt there was a lack of openness by some senior managers.
37. These problems have, to some extent, been addressed by the Area which now builds in the opportunity for group and individual consultation when strategic decisions are taken. In particular, the proposals for the restructuring of the Area have been made after consultation with Area staff at a series of open fora and a local implementation team was established to consider the comments from staff. Briefings for staff also occur at key points on major initiatives and during change processes. A representative group of staff contributes to formulation of the business plan.
38. However, managers are aware that communications within the Area can still be improved and are striving further in this respect.

Recommendation 8 - The CCP should:

- **design a framework for systematic identification and implementation of improvements in both casework and administrative processes;**
 - **draw up Terms of Reference governing the work of the management groups, with clear definition of responsibilities and inter-relationships;**
 - **enhance and increase the engagement and responsibilities of the Level D managers in management.**
39. **Substantial progress.** The current management structure has changed little since the last inspection. Then, as now, the CCPAG comprised the CCP, ABM and three unit managers. CCPAG meetings were supported by the Casework Advisory Group and unit management meetings. Team meetings were held within units. There were concerns that some issues dealt with by CCPAG could be resolved within the units and that, despite the Area management structure supporting good lines of communication, this was not being fully achieved and information did not flow as freely as it might.
40. There were further concerns that the team leaders (of whom there were seven) within the units had a lower level of management responsibility than those in other Areas. As such, they tended to have a lower appreciation of management issues at a more strategic level and their ability to communicate the Area's vision and values to team members was adversely affected. These issues needed to be addressed.

41. The Area has achieved some success in addressing the issues, principally in respect of enhancing the management and representational role of team leaders. Team leaders attend some inter-agency meetings in their own right as well as deputising for Unit Heads and have assumed greater responsibility for particular thematic aspects of casework. They were also more involved in contributing to the formulation of the current Area Business Plan.
42. The Area's commitment to performance management has improved and performance against key targets and projects is discussed at CCPAG meetings. The Area Casework Advisory Group meets regularly to consider a wide range of casework performance information, including that from partner agencies. Unit performance reports are now produced. The principal management fora, however, still do not have terms of reference.
43. Staff communication has improved within the existing management structure although senior managers could still take a more corporate approach to this issue. Team meetings have not been held as frequently as they might or should have been and consequently have not been as effective as a means of communication.

Aspects for improvement

44. Some progress has been made in respect of all the AFIs. We comment on each of these at Annex 1.

Strengths

45. We identified eight strengths in the Area. They were
 - Handling of disclosure.
 - Work undertaken to promulgate implementation of Anti Social Behaviour Orders.
 - Approach to handling sensitive performance issues.
 - Activities supporting equality and diversity.
 - Contribution and commitment to the ASCJB.
 - Commitment to working with other criminal justice agencies to improve the casework process.
 - Commitment to community engagement.
 - Involvement of a wide range of staff in formulating the Area Business Plan.

46. We were satisfied that these strengths had been maintained. The Area continues to take a lead role in dealing with anti-social behaviour. Performance in respect of disclosure remains sound, although efforts should be made to ensure that lawyers are trained in the new provisions of the CJA 2003. ETMP is now established in the Area and Case Progression Officers liaise with partner criminal justice agencies to ensure that cases are trial ready. Unsuccessful outcomes are monitored, data is analysed and performance issues are discussed with other agencies.
47. Senior managers' commitment to the ASCJB has been maintained. The CCP chairs the Board and other members of CCPAG lead or are involved with the ASCJB sub-groups.
48. Staff at all levels are involved in the formulation of the Area Business Plan, though a more corporate approach by the CCPAG could be adopted in this respect. The commitment of senior managers to equality and diversity is well evidenced. The Area has a comprehensive community engagement strategy and senior managers and other staff are involved in a wide range of, often very challenging, community activities.

Conclusion

49. The Area Action Plan to address the recommendations of the inspection report is comprehensive, although delivery dates for some of the improvements, and actions taken towards implementation, have not been as prompt as they might have been. Nevertheless, the Area has taken some steps forward in relation to each issue and is monitoring closely those in which the rate of progress has been slow or disappointing.
50. Overall, the trend is one of improvement. The Area is realising the benefits from pre-charge decisions, particularly in respect of magistrates' courts cases. Arrangements for case progression under ETMP are beginning to impact positively on cracked and ineffective trial rates, although witness problems are still an issue in some Crown Court cases. Additional training and new procedures have led to an improvement in cases involving confiscation of assets.
51. Improvements have also been made to arrangements for witness care although the level of care in some aspects still requires further attention. There has been some improvement in the standard of letters sent to victims following a dropped or altered charge but a full review of Direct Communication with Victim (DCV) procedures has yet to be undertaken. Work is also still continuing to improve systems for analysing and disseminating performance information and in developing a training programme for level A and D staff.
52. Area managers are aware of the need to maintain and continue progress towards improvement not just in relation to our recommendations but in respect of performance generally. Their commitment in this respect is evident.

**CPS AVON AND SOMERSET
PROGRESS AGAINST ASPECTS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

| PARA NUMBER | ASPECT FOR IMPROVEMENT | POSITION AS AT OCTOBER 2005 |
|--------------------|--|---|
| 4.35 | Balance and type of input to the pre- and post-committal process by lawyers and caseworkers. | Substantial progress. Differences in the involvement of caseworkers in committal preparation at the Taunton and Bristol offices have been addressed. Caseworkers in the Bristol office, where involvement was previously limited, are generally achieving their target of preparing four committal cases per month. Cases are assigned to individual caseworkers once the file is received in the Trials Unit (TU). The caseworker prepares the committal according to a timetable and then submits it to the lawyer for signing off. Caseworkers prepare the brief, although any case analysis and discussion about acceptable pleas is done by the lawyer. |
| 4.35 | Assurance of the standard of instructions to counsel. | Limited progress. Team leaders carry out some checking of the quality of briefs to counsel but it is informal and needs to be more structured. CQA gives some indication of the quality of briefs but the level of Area monitoring under the scheme has been lower than the national requirement of one case per lawyer per month. The Area is considering introducing a requirement that caseworker managers in the TU should monitor one brief per caseworker per month. |

| PARA NUMBER | ASPECT FOR IMPROVEMENT | POSITION AS AT OCTOBER 2005 |
|-------------|--|--|
| 4.35 | Timely compliance with Plea and Directions Hearing orders. | <p>Limited progress. In highlighting the problems with the effectiveness of plea and directions hearings which were largely the result of obtaining details of the availability of witnesses for trials, the inspection report hoped that the implementation of ETMP would address matters. ETMP is now operational in the Crown Court, although there are differences between the north and south of the Area for ensuring that cases are trial ready. In the south (Taunton), the unit casework manager acts as case progression officer (CPO). In Bristol, two caseworkers have been designated as case progression officers. CPOs prepare weekly reports on the state of progress in cases awaiting trial and are responsible for submitting certificates of trial readiness to the Crown Court. Ensuring that details of witness availability are up-to-date is part of the overall function. Problems with witnesses still account for over half of those ineffective trials for which the prosecution is responsible, although these do not necessarily relate to issues of availability. It is too early to assess the overall impact of ETMP in Crown Court cases.</p> |
| 4.51 | Training and implementation of Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA). | <p>Substantial progress. Since the inspection, the Area POCA Champion has provided training for lawyers on the operation of the Act and ten lawyers have been specifically trained in handling restraint proceedings.</p> <p>The Area has also designed specific forms to ensure that the application of POCA in appropriate cases is considered at the pre-charge decision and when a full file is submitted.</p> <p>Although the Area did not meet its target for the number of confiscation orders in 2004-05, it has exceeded its target for 2005-06.</p> |

| PARA NUMBER | ASPECT FOR IMPROVEMENT | POSITION AS AT OCTOBER 2005 |
|-------------|---|---|
| 4.62 | Telephone answering service. | <p>Achieved. The main issue has been addressed. There were concerns that it was difficult to make contact with Area staff by telephone. Normal office business means that staff are often away from their desks for extended periods and some staff are reluctant to pick up their colleagues' calls. This was addressed immediately by requiring units to implement systems to ensure that telephone calls are answered and enquiries dealt with promptly. Staff are required to pick up calls of absent colleagues and deal with them as appropriate.</p> |
| 4.80 | Timely finalisation and accuracy of Performance Indicators, including warrants. | <p>Limited progress. The TU in Bristol had been experiencing problems with processes for finalising and archiving files. The situation was much better at Taunton where a checklist was used to match up finalisations with archived cases. Although Area procedures are now more consistent in this respect, there are still some residual problems and completion of the migration of cases to the new case management system revealed a large number of unfinalised cases going back some time. There are still no specific procedures which can guarantee accuracy of data in respect of case finalisations. Data integrity audits at regular intervals, for example quarterly, which focus on all aspects of finalisation and case status reporting would help improve accuracy of data and staff awareness of the principles involved.</p> |

| PARA NUMBER | ASPECT FOR IMPROVEMENT | POSITION AS AT OCTOBER 2005 |
|-------------|---|---|
| 4.85 | Systems for learning from experience across units. | <p>Limited progress. Although there were effective mechanisms within units for providing feedback on individual performance and on general lessons to be learned from casework, there was no system for spreading information across units. The Area has sought to address this by promoting a common casework culture across units and relating this to training on pre-charge decisions and other casework issues. It has also sought to implement a common approach to providing feedback on casework issues through monthly and quarterly casework reports compiled on a unit basis but which are distributed to all lawyers and caseworkers in the Area. Monthly joint performance management meetings were to be held with the police and minutes circulated to all lawyers. Progress in these objectives has been mixed. They were largely achieved in the south although they have been restarted after a recent lapse. Implementation has been slower in the north with only partial achievement by September 2005.</p> |
| 6.5 | Timely provision of appropriate witness information to the Witness Service. | <p>Substantial progress. The Area reviewed its systems for providing information to the Witness Service by establishing firstly the then existing level of service provided and then liaising with the Witness Service to establish a common Area standard. The Area now supplies lists of witnesses required to attend court to the Witness Service in all cases and highlights sensitive cases and those where witnesses have special needs or Special Measures orders have been made. In addition, the full implementation of the Avon and Somerset Witness Care Units (WCUs) in Bristol and Taunton has made some improvement to the general level of witness care, although lack of funding for the additional resources has impacted upon the ability to deliver a full service throughout the county. The Area liaises with representatives of the Witness Service frequently and regularly on an informal basis, and in formal meetings.</p> |

| PARA NUMBER | ASPECT FOR IMPROVEMENT | POSITION AS AT OCTOBER 2005 |
|-------------|--|---|
| 6.10 | Systems for identifying and assuring timeliness and quality of DCV letters. | <p>Limited progress. DCV letters are handled by the centrally located DCV team which now comes under the WCU. The period following implementation of the unit has seen efforts concentrated on staff training and managing the new processes. This has meant that there has not been any review or evaluation of the existing procedures for DCV, though this will be considered once the WCU is fully embedded and will be done as part of an overall review.</p> <p>There has been some improvement to the quality of the letters sent, although this is more incidental than the result of direct action. There is still little monitoring of letters other than that done by team leaders looking at discontinued cases who are then able to check that a letter has been sent to a victim where required.</p> <p>Timeliness continues to be poor. There has been some recent improvement but it is too early to determine if this can be sustained.</p> |
| 7.6 | Collation, analysis and dissemination of performance management information. | <p>Limited progress. At the time of the inspection, there was no consistent approach to analysing and disseminating performance information which led to a low level of understanding of performance amongst Area staff. The Area has reviewed its approach to performance management and is developing systems which link personal objectives to unit and Area objectives. It is developing a balanced scorecard which will set out how the Area is performing against its targets and its budget position. Performance management reports have been developed for individual units which will be discussed at unit management meetings.</p> |

| PARA NUMBER | ASPECT FOR IMPROVEMENT | POSITION AS AT OCTOBER 2005 |
|-------------|---|--|
| 8.15 | Training for level A and D staff. | <p>Substantial progress. A training programme for level A and D staff has been incorporated into the 2005-06 Learning and Development plan.</p> <p>Work in other aspects is still progressing. The Area is developing a training programme for level A staff which will include modules for new staff as well as separate modules for experienced staff to develop skills needed to support succession planning.</p> <p>A training needs analysis is to be carried out for level D staff by the end of December 2005 and the regional learning and development manager is working with the Area to develop and deliver the required training.</p> |
| 8.23 | Dissemination of information from management meetings to staff. | <p>Limited progress. Communication systems have improved, although senior managers are aware that it is not yet at the level they would want. Immediate action was taken to ensure that unit heads disseminated information from CCPAG meetings at unit management meetings and information from those meetings was to be disseminated to staff at their relevant team meetings. Minutes of team meetings are published to team members within three working days.</p> <p>Although these arrangements are in place, there is still the danger of attrition as there is an element of discretion as to what and how much information is cascaded. There has been some variation in the frequency and effectiveness of team meetings. A monthly briefing document of current information was introduced in June 2005 for all line managers to use in team meetings in order to achieve consistency.</p> |

| PARA NUMBER | ASPECT FOR IMPROVEMENT | POSITION AS AT OCTOBER 2005 |
|-------------|---|---|
| 10.20 | Joint performance management of file quality | Substantial progress. The implementation of statutory charging and consequent improvements to file building processes have seen an increase in the quality of police files. Local targets for submitting cases which were either fully satisfactory or sufficient to proceed were exceeded in 2004-05. Although timeliness is still below that target, the quality and timeliness of files are discussed with the police at unit JPM meetings. |
| 10.20 | Case progression in the Crown Court | Substantial progress. ETMP has now been implemented within the Crown Court. The principal feature is the use of CPOs to ensure that cases are ready to proceed at trial and that any outstanding actions are followed up promptly. Although the responsibility for the case progression function is different in the north and south of the Area, the role is the same. |
| 12.3 | Timeliness and quality of complaint correspondence and proper upkeep of logs. | Substantial progress. Following the inspection, staff involved in dealing with complaints were reminded of the procedures and their obligations to ensure that complaints were dealt with promptly and within timescales. Although delays in dealing with complaints have been addressed and the quality of responses has improved, the Area still needs to review complaints procedures and the quality of responses on a regular basis. |

