



HMCPSP focussed inspection into unsuccessful outcomes in magistrates' court cases in Dorset and Northamptonshire

CPS must improve its successful case outcomes in Northamptonshire

A report by Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPSP) has found that too many cases in former CPS unit of Northamptonshire are not resulting in convictions.

Inspectors looked into "unsuccessful outcomes" in Magistrates' courts in Northamptonshire. An unsuccessful outcome describes any case which after being charged does not result in either a guilty plea or the conviction of the accused.

"Cases taking too long to progress"

The report found that the Northamptonshire unit need to work more closely with the courts to reduce the delay and number of hearings in progressing cases. The inspectors identified there was an issue with the length of time it takes from charge to the conclusion of a case. Inspectors also identified that the unit's prosecutors needed to be more proactive in court when progressing cases at first hearing so that delays are kept to a minimum.

This affects the willingness of victims and witnesses to attend a trial and has led to a number of unsuccessful cases in Northamptonshire owing to key victims or witnesses no longer supporting the case.

In 2012-13 it took on average of over 123 days for a case to progress from charge to finalisation. The national average was over 86 days which meant that Northamptonshire was ranked 40th out of the 42 CPS units.

The report made the following recommendations:

- The CPS needs to review with its partner agencies the contact with and support given to victims and witnesses.
- The CPS needs to work with HM Courts & Tribunals Service to minimise delays in listing cases for trial.
- The Area should review the allocation of lawyers between initial review and trial review teams to ensure the optimum balance is obtained.

HM Chief Inspector, Michael Fuller QPM, said:

"This report identified the urgent need for the CPS in Northamptonshire to work with the courts to reduce delays in progressing cases. Victims and witnesses should be at the heart of everything CPS does and they must work hard with outside agencies to ensure they are given all possible support."

"If the performance is to improve Northamptonshire need to ensure they progress cases swiftly and efficiently to a successful conclusion."

ends

Notes to editors

1. Media enquiries: 020 7271 2440
2. CPS Northamptonshire has become a part of CPS East Midlands which comprises the CPS Units of Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire and Northamptonshire.
3. Inspectors considered if the make-up of the case load in each Unit compared to the national average had significantly affected the unsuccessful outcome rate
4. The report also considered the breakdown of cases between police charged cases and CPS charged cases
5. Inspectors selected a sample of approximately 40 files from each Unit that had been finalised with finalisation codes where there was a significant variation from the national average. These files were read to try to identify why the case had been unsuccessful and what, if anything, could have been done to prevent the unsuccessful outcome
6. CPS managers in each Unit and local police representatives involved in case file preparation were interviewed on site to obtain their views
7. The full report can be found at www.hmcpsi.gov.uk