



Inspectors call for decisive action to streamline the criminal justice process and end unnecessary bureaucracy

Inspectors of the police and Crown Prosecution Service believe that the time has come for those with responsibility for the criminal justice system to act decisively to streamline the criminal justice process, and end the unnecessary bureaucracy that has been a barrier to progress.

In a joint review published today, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) and HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPST) found that while significant effort has been made in recent years to improve efficiency in both the custody and criminal justice process., there are still a number of issues identified in past reports on this subject which continue to generate delays in processing cases. For example:

- There are still too many people detained in police custody under Section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983.
- Vulnerable detainees often required one-to-one monitoring by officers – a very time-consuming process.
- Children and young people denied bail following charge continue to be detained in cells rather than transferred to local authority accommodation.
- A lack of holding cells and custody officers was resulting in excessive waiting times to 'book in' prisoners.
- Obtaining results of forensic science analyses can take a long time.
- Repeating mandatory drug testing for prolific offenders regularly in police detention.
- Officers are still being used for escort duties when detainees are taken to hospital.
- Arrangements for the transfer of detainees to court by private companies are not always effective and often resulted in police officers transporting detainees to court themselves.
- A key document for the prosecution in a case is the Police Report which should contain all the information needed to present a case to court. As part of the review 40 case files were assessed. When looking at the summary of evidence portion of the forms, Inspectors found that only three out of the 40 (7.5%) were of a sufficient quality. These results are a marked decline from the findings of a similar exercise conducted in 2011.

Unnecessary bureaucracy has the effect of keeping officers at their desks when they should be out, protecting the public from harm. The effective management of information enables the police service to comply with the law, where the rights and interests of vulnerable people, suspects, victims and witnesses are protected and upheld.

Justice is better served when good quality information is passed between agencies within the CJS and much can be done to streamline the process from arrest or detention to release from the police station or disposal at court - particularly around IT.

HM Inspector of Constabulary, Drusilla Sharpling and Chief Inspector of HM Crown Prosecution Service, Michael Fuller, said:

“We believe the time has come to act decisively, with renewed focus and determination to streamline the criminal justice process and banish the spectre of unnecessary bureaucracy that has been, for far too long, an impediment to progress. We hope this review provides some insights on how police officer time might be freed up while improving performance within the system.”

Notes to Editors

1. A copy of the full report, *Stop the Drift 2: A Continuing Focus on 21st Century Criminal Justice* can be found at www.hmic.gov.uk
2. A copy of the 2010 report *Stop the Drift* can be found at www.hmic.gov.uk
3. Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) is an independent inspectorate, inspecting policing in the public interest, and rigorously examines the efficiency and effectiveness of police forces to tackle crime and terrorism, improve criminal justice and raise confidence. HMIC inspects all 43 police forces in England and Wales together with other major policing bodies.
4. Her Majesty’s Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPSI) is the independent inspectorate for the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). Its purpose is to enhance the quality of justice through independent inspection and assessment of prosecution services, and in so doing improve their effectiveness and efficiency. HMCPSI’s Chief Inspector reports directly to the Attorney General.
5. For further information, HMIC’s press office can be contacted during office hours from 8:30am – 5:30pm Monday – Friday on 0203 513 0600. Please note, it is unlikely interviews will be available.
6. HMIC’s out-of-hours press office line for urgent media enquiries is 07836 217 729.