



# PRESS RELEASE

(EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:01 HRS 3 March 2005)

3 March 2005



## SURREY CRIMINAL JUSTICE AREA JOINT INSPECTION



Her Majesty's  
Inspectorate  
of Prisons



Her Majesty's  
Inspectorate  
of Probation

The Chief Inspectors of the Criminal Justice Inspectorates<sup>1</sup> have today published their joint Report on the Surrey criminal justice area. It is only the second such Report in this country. A joint team drawn from five Inspectorates examined the workings of the criminal justice system in Surrey to assess its effectiveness and identify ways in which the agencies can improve their overall performance. The scrutiny ranged from the initial report of a crime by a victim through the criminal process to the point of sentence. The key role of the Surrey Criminal Justice Board in developing and delivering improved inter-agency working and public confidence was examined.

The Surrey Criminal Justice Board is performing well against the majority of its key targets:

- Offences brought to justice increased by 24% over the baseline established in 2001-02, against a target of 5% for 2003-04.
- The ineffective<sup>2</sup> trial rates in both the magistrates' courts and the Crown Court are reducing.

<sup>1</sup> The Criminal Justice Inspectorates is the collective term for:

- HM Inspectorate of Constabulary;
- HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate;
- HM Magistrates' Courts Service Inspectorate;
- HM Inspectorate of Prisons; and
- HM Inspectorate of Probation.

<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this inspection, the Inspectorates worked in conjunction with the Quality & Standards Unit of Victim Support. Ineffective trials are those listed for a contested hearing which do not proceed on the day fixed, but are adjourned for a further hearing – with a consequent waste of resources in addition to the delay for both court and parties.

- The British Crime Survey shows that 45% of citizens have confidence in the effectiveness of the local criminal justice system in bringing offenders to justice. This compares favourably with a national average of 41%.

However, the Area has failed to consistently meet its target for the timely handling of cases with persistent young offenders, and is working to improve this aspect of performance.

The inspection team found a number of good practices and strengths in the area, including:

- An initiative by Staines Police Station to contact each victim of a crime every seven days until the crime is finalised or a person is charged.
- The development and use by Surrey police of electronic referrals to Victim Support once a crime had been reported.
- Partnership between the CPS and the police at the Staines Criminal Justice Unit so that cases are jointly owned from start to finish by the same lawyer and police administrator.
- The creation of a structure of inter-agency Local Performance Groups to manage performance in the magistrates' courts.
- The high quality of overall service provided by the Surrey Magistrates' Courts' Committee to court users in the magistrates' courts.
- Good standard of treatment of prisoners by the prisoner escort contractor.

The inspection team was also able to identify a number of ways in which performance within the Surrey criminal justice area, and public confidence in the effectiveness of the criminal justice system in Surrey, could be improved. These included:

- Victim and witness care, through better liaison between Surrey police and Victim Support, earlier identification of vulnerable and intimidated witnesses and the use of Victim Personal Statements at sentence.

- More effective identification of cases where the use of Special Measures would be appropriate for vulnerable witnesses.
- Communication of initiatives within the criminal justice agencies and greater engagement of staff in developing the Public Confidence Programme.
- Fuller engagement with the wider community and the development of a Communications Strategy with the community.
- Improved joint performance management in relation to the pre-charge advice scheme, police file quality and timeliness, timeliness with which not guilty cases are brought to trial in the magistrates' courts and the Crown Court, and reducing cracked trials<sup>3</sup>.
- Strategies for the diversion of mentally disordered offenders from the criminal process.

In total, inspectors identified three examples of good practice, where the area was working in an exemplary fashion, and identified a further four examples of where the area performed strongly. They also made 11 recommendations, identifying actions to improve inter-agency aspects of performance in Surrey, and a further six aspects for suggested improvement.

The Report will be formally presented to the Ministers responsible for the criminal justice system (the Home Secretary, the Lord Chancellor and the Attorney General). It will also be submitted to the National Criminal Justice Board.

In presenting the Report, Stephen Wooler (HM Chief Inspector of the Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate) said on behalf of the Chief Inspectors:

---

<sup>3</sup> A cracked trial occurs when either the defendant pleads guilty, or the case is dropped, on the day of trial. An ineffective trial is one which is adjourned, for whatever reason, to another day. The common feature is that, in each case, the court will have set aside time for a contested hearing and witnesses will have been warned. Cracked and ineffective trials are a source of inefficiency and wasted time for witnesses.

*“The Government’s purpose in creating a system of Local Criminal Justice Boards was to develop a better cohesion and co-ordination amongst those responsible for criminal justice. The Surrey Criminal Justice Board had only been in existence for about 18 months at the time of this inspection. What has been achieved in Surrey so far has shown how well that can work and provides a sound platform for further development. But it’s only the start of the process and, as the Report sets out, there are significant issues yet to be tackled.”*

## **Notes for Editors**

1. This was the second in a series of planned inspections of local criminal justice areas. They are intended to complement a range of measures initiated by the Government to develop cohesion and better co-ordinated working arrangements amongst the criminal justice agencies, so that the system can operate in a more holistic manner. Public Service Agreements between HM Treasury and the relevant Departments set out the expectations that the Government has for the criminal justice system at national levels. The framework within which this system is managed nationally has been substantially revised and that is reflected by the establishment in each of the 42 criminal justice areas of a Local Criminal Justice Board. Each Inspectorate now places even greater emphasis on the effectiveness of relationships between the organisation which they are responsible for inspecting and other criminal justice agencies, and its contribution to the work of the Boards. The Boards operate on a non-statutory basis and formally came into existence on 1 April 2003. They provide a national infrastructure for more integrated inspection and so this is a natural development.
2. The existence of a Local Criminal Justice Board now makes it possible to undertake a detailed diagnostic look at how the agencies in a specific area work together to deliver justice for all members of society, ranging from the investigation and prosecution of crime, through the care of victims and witnesses, to the point of sentence.
3. In doing so, the inspection team has endeavoured to bridge some gaps in the existing arrangements for inspection of the criminal justice system. For example, although there are not yet any statutory inspection arrangements for the work of the Court Service, the Senior Presiding Judge and the Chief Executive of the Court Service agreed that this inspection should include the work of the Court Service at Guildford Crown Court. The Chief Inspectors are grateful for their co-operation.
4. The Criminal Justice Chief Inspectors’ Group (CJCIG) comprises the Chief Inspectors of the Inspectorates of the Crown Prosecution Service, Constabulary, Magistrates’ Courts Service, Probation Service and Prison Service. They work in conjunction with other Inspectorates when their responsibilities touch on the criminal justice system. On this occasion they were assisted by the Quality Assurance Unit of Victim Support.
5. The strategic aim of the CJCIG is “to foster and contribute to the continuous improvement of the criminal justice system for all its stakeholders, through a programme of individual, co-ordinated and joint inspections and monitoring, in accordance with the

Ministers' policy for a better joined-up Government". The Criminal Justice Chief Inspectors' Group is supported in its activities by the Joint Inspectorates' Secretariat.

6. The Surrey Criminal Justice Board comprises:

Sandie Hebblethwaite (CPS Chief Crown Prosecutor) Chair

Robert Quick (Police Chief Constable)

Simon Townley (Crown Court Group Manager and Area Director Designate for the Court Service in Surrey)

Karen Page (Chief Probation Officer)

Sian West (Governor, Highdown Prison)

Toby Wells (Manager, Surrey Youth Offending Team)

Mark Rowley (Police Assistant Chief Constable)

John Baker (Director of Legal Service, Surrey Magistrates' Court)

7. HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate combined the joint inspection of the criminal justice system in Surrey with a full inspection of CPS Surrey. The joint report will be co-ordinated with the publication of the individual report in relation to the CPS.

8. Any inquiries about this Press Release should be addressed to: Michael Fogg at HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (tel: 020 7210 1143; mob: 07901 856346 fax: 020 7210 1195; email: Michael.Fogg@cps.gsi.gov.uk).

9. Press co-ordination will be through a lead agency which will be HMCPSI. All general inquiries or response to the Report should be addressed there.