



HMCPSP CPS THAMES VALLEY UNIT FOCUSED INSPECTION REPORT

Inspectors say CPS Thames Valley needs to improve

The CPS in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire has come in for criticism over the way it handled a sample of cases in 2013.

Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPSP) found examples of CPS Thames Valley prosecutors trying to continue cases which should not have been charged and problems processing cases efficiently in readiness for magistrates' court trials. The inspection looked closely at the performance of the Crown Prosecution Service's (CPS) Thames Valley unit and analysed the causes for its record of poor legal decisions, weak case progression and low rate of successful outcomes.

It was prompted by the Inspectorate's 2012 Annual Case Examination Programme (ACEP) where some Thames Valley prosecution case files showed weaknesses in decision making at charging stage and at subsequent case review.

HM Chief Inspector, Michael Fuller QPM, said:

"This is a pivotal time for the Area. There are encouraging signs that the unit's managers understand the underlying issues and are now beginning to tackle individual performance in a more robust manner, but this has to become accepted practice across the board and not just an exceptional course."

Staff performance management was also judged to be a key issue. The inspection concluded that much greater attention must be paid to individual performance management. There are encouraging signs that the unit's managers understand the underlying issues of weak or inconsistent performance management and are now beginning to tackle individual performance in a more robust manner.

Other findings of this focussed report include:

- That the Area has worked to improve case listing arrangements in the magistrates' court in the past 18 months but considerable backlogs remain.
- The processing of Crown Court casework has improved more recently.

ends

Notes to editors

1. Media enquiries: 020 7271 2484 or russell.hayes@attorneygeneral.gsi.gov.uk
2. The full report can be found at www.hmcpsi.gov.uk
3. The CPS word for its regional divisions is spelt Area, with a capital 'A'
4. The CPS Thames Valley unit is a part of the wider Thames & Chiltern Area (one of 13 areas across the

CPS nationally) and prosecutes cases investigated by Thames Valley Police originating in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire.

5. A file sample of 76 finalised cases was examined (split equally between MC and CC files); the type of files selected was consistent with the breakdown used in the revised 2013-14 ACEP style inspection.
6. HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate is an independent statutory body established by the Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate Act 2000, which came into force on 1 October 2000. The Chief Inspector is appointed by, and reports to, the Attorney General.