



PRESS RELEASE

Issued under EMBARGO to Thursday 31 July – 11 am

REPORT OF A JOINT INSPECTION OF ASPECTS OF THE ENFORCEMENT OF COURT ORDERS

HMICA is publishing a report today on a report into the effectiveness of the work between Courts, Probation Areas, Youth Offending Teams and Police Services to enforce obligations to attend probation/YOT appointments and court hearings. It also looked at the efficient and effective production and execution of warrants where there is a breach of a community penalty order or failure to appear at court.

Three recommendations are made in the report, which seek to make improvements in the following areas:

- National, inter-agency strategies for the aspects of enforcement covered in the report
- Procedures for dealing with defendants who surrender to the court, or attend Probation/YOT offices, when wanted on warrant
- Training provision for people employed in the enforcement process.

Key findings include:

1. Since earlier inspections, enforcement has been given a greater priority by the criminal justice agencies and there have been notable improvements in performance; for example a 42% reduction in the number of outstanding FTA warrants between March 2005 and June 2007¹. Improvements in the enforcement of community penalties have been supported by the production of an Effective Practice Guide on Community Penalties, and the introduction of the Community Penalty Enforcement Tracker, *Comet*, which provides criminal justice agencies with a comprehensive tool for the monitoring of breach cases. Joint Criminal Justice Targets have provided an impetus for local partnership working between criminal justice agencies, whilst the National Enforcement

¹ *Working Together to Cut Crime and Deliver Justice – A Strategic Plan for 2008-20011*. OCJR (November 2007)

Service, launched in 2005, has begun to deliver some tangible results in the Areas where it has been piloted.

2. There is some lack of clarity in national guidance provided to local criminal justice agencies. This has led to confusion and disparities in local practices. It also raised concerns about how the need to have local practices in response to local needs and resources, can be reconciled with the fact that enforcement is a national issue and agencies have to work together across borders in a consistent way.
3. Some of the processes in operation within Areas were found to be inefficient and a number of concerns were identified in relation to:
 - Lack of joined-up IT systems to support enforcement between agencies and across borders
 - Persistent problems with the execution of out-of-Area warrants
 - Processes for dealing with defendants who surrender to the court on warrant.
4. A lack of joined-up working, within agencies, and within Criminal Justice Areas (CJAs), persists and creates gaps that can enable offenders to escape justice. It is imperative that effective partnership working is in place, and that there is understanding at all levels of how the actions of individual agencies, and CJAs, impact on the national management of offenders.

Notes for editors

1. The Areas visited as part of this inspection were Greater Manchester, Essex, North Yorkshire and London
2. Public Service Agreements (PSAs) between HM Treasury and the relevant organisations set out the expectations that the Government has for the criminal justice agencies at a local and national level. A new set of PSAs has been agreed for the spending period 2008-11.

Contacts

[For more information about this Inspection, please contact HM Chief Inspector of Court Administration, Eddie Bloomfield, on 020 7217 4342 or email \[eddie.bloomfield@hmica.gsi.gov.uk\]\(mailto:eddie.bloomfield@hmica.gsi.gov.uk\)](#)

Inspection reports are public documents. For further copies of this and other publications, including annual reports and thematic reviews, please contact:

Lori Buckley, Publications Manager, HMICA
Block 2 Government Buildings
Burghill Road,
Westbury on Trym
Bristol BS10 6EZ

Tel: 0117 959 8203 / 8200 or visit our website at www.hmica.gov.uk