



Press Release

Embargoed until 2 April 2007

Putting young defendants at the heart of the Youth Courts

HMICA's Inspection report¹ on how well the Youth Courts have applied the *Youth Courts Good Practice Guide – the changing culture of the Youth Court*², since the guide was issued in 2001, is published today.

Eddie Bloomfield, HMICA's Chief Inspector, says:

"...overall, the culture of the Youth Courts has changed over the last five years [...] young defendants are now very central to the proceedings and the language and style of the court process has changed to ensure this happens"

Inspectors are pleased to have found excellent examples of hard work and dedication in the Youth Courts. In the report they make a number of recommendations and suggestions for building on the good work already done, including:

- improving the availability of pre-court information for defendants (and victims - who might wish to attend but not realise that they can ask to do so);
- early identification of young people with learning difficulties or disabilities;

- clarifying the rules around the use of prison video-links for pre-trial hearings;
- ensuring a good flow of inter-agency information - particularly in the light of the Mubarek Inquiry³;
- clarifying guidance on interpreter arrangements;
- and giving consideration to the published guidance on making court processes more open.

Inspectors are particularly worried that it is unclear who is responsible for young people who have been sentenced or remanded to local authority secure accommodation, and who are left to wait on court premises for collection by prisoner escort agencies. This uncertainty puts a vulnerable group of young people in danger. The risks have been highlighted by the Inspectorate to HMCS and suggestions made concerning interim arrangements.

ENDS

Notes for Editors

1. This Inspection report is entitled:

HMICA Thematic Inspection of Youth Courts: Implementation of the Youth Court Good Practice Guide 2001.

It will be available on HMICA's web site from 2 April 2007.

Inspection reports are public documents. Copies of HMICA's publications, including annual reports and thematic reviews, may be obtained from:

Tim Paviour, Publications Manager, HMICA
Block 2 Government Buildings, Burghill Road, Westbury-on-Trym,
Bristol BS10 6EZ. (Tel: 0117 959 8201)

Or via our website at:

www.hmica.gov.uk

2. *The Youth Courts Good practice Guide (2001)* can be downloaded at:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/ythcrt01>

It was prepared jointly by the Home Office and the then Lord Chancellor's Department (now DCA) to assist the Youth Courts in effectively contributing towards a reformed youth justice system.

3. The *Mubarek Inquiry Report* can be downloaded at:

<http://www.zahidmubarekinquiry.org.uk/index.asp>

4. Your contact for HMICA:

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