



Press Notice

13 July 2010

020 7035 2123

EMBARGOED: NOT FOR USE UNTIL 1100, WEDNESDAY 14 JULY

CHIEF INSPECTOR RECOGNISES BETTER SERVICE FOR USERS OF COURTS BUT REPORTS THAT THERE IS STILL NEED FOR IMPROVEMENT

Courts are making welcome efforts to improve the way they manage cases, said David Abbott, Acting HM Chief Inspector of Court Administration, publishing his first annual report. Improvements have been made although there is still work to be done to ensure the delivery of high quality services to users.

HM Inspectorate of Court Administration's annual report for 2009-10 details its work during the year in inspecting the administration of the Crown Court, county courts and magistrates' courts and its inspection of the Military Court Service. The report also provides information of the work HMICA has done with other justice inspectorates to improve services provided to people who come into contact with any part of the justice system.

One issue the inspectorate focused on this year was the quality of the basic administration of court cases. Inspections found evidence of some poor performance for example in how promptly and accurately the outcomes of court hearings are notified to those who need them ('resulting'), which can have an impact on victims, witnesses and defendants, and can hinder the police from carrying out their role effectively. HM Courts Service was already taking steps to address these issues and responded positively to the recommendations made.

During 2009-10, HMICA carried out an inspection of the criminal and family courts in the Cleveland, Durham and Northumbria Area of Her Majesty's Courts Service (HMCS). It also inspected the management of criminal cases including the efficiency and effectiveness of the provision of information on the outcomes of court hearings. Its inspection of the Military Court Service was undertaken at the invitation of the Ministry of Defence, as part of the Government's response to *The Deepcut Review*. With other inspectorates, HMICA has inspected areas of work such as; pre-sentence work with offenders with mental disorders; the system of recovering assets obtained as a result of criminal activity; youth offending service courts work; and the exchange of information and data security between criminal justice agencies.

Post inspection reviews covered: family court services for Surrey and Sussex HMCS Area and Sheffield family courts; the administration and 'resulting' of cases in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire HMCS Area; the 'resulting' and warrant withdrawal procedures at Leeds Magistrates' Court; how the Coroners Service for Northern Ireland supports bereaved families; and electronic monitoring services.

David Abbott said:

"During the course of the year, a number of our inspections and reviews looked at important issues such as how promptly and accurately the outcomes of court hearings are notified to those who need them. I welcome HMCS' renewed efforts to improve its service in this core activity and hope our recommendations will prove useful in the ongoing challenge of maintaining a good service under current budgetary constraints."

In December 2009, the Government announced its intention to abolish HMICA. No formal abolition date has yet been set.

- Ends -

Notes to Editors:

1. A copy of the annual report can be found on the HM Inspectorate of Court Administration website from 14 July 2010 at www.hmica.gov.uk.
2. HM Inspectorate of Court Administration is an independent, statutory inspectorate created by the Courts Act 2003 as amended by the Police and Justice Act 2006. HMICA's duty is to inspect and report to the Lord Chancellor on the system that supports the carrying on of the business of the courts (the Crown Court, county courts and magistrates' courts) and the services provided for those courts.
3. The decision to abolish HMICA was announced in December 2009, in the *Smarter Government White Paper*.
4. Please contact Jane Parsons in HM Inspectorate of Court Administration Press Office on 0207 035 2123 or 07880 787452 from 0915 to 1415 Monday to Friday if you would like more information or to request an interview with David Abbott.