

HM Inspectorate of Court Administration

Strategic Plan 2009 — 2012

Contents

Chief Inspector's foreword	5
Our mission - what we do	6
Our vision - what we want to achieve	7
Stakeholder perspective	8
Capabilities perspective	10
Resource perspective	12
Internal process perspective	13
Conclusion	15
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Appendix A - The ten principles of inspection	16
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Chief Inspector's foreword

I am pleased to present HMICA's Strategic Plan for the period 2009-2012. Following the Government's decision in October 2006 not to merge the criminal justice inspectorates, HMICA carried out an internal strategic review in 2007. The purpose of this review was to set our strategic direction and to identify our priorities for the future as an independent inspectorate, both in terms of inspection, and corporately. Following this we have now produced this strategic plan, which sets out the priorities for us over the next three years. It will be used to inform consultation with our partners and stakeholders about our plans each year, starting in the autumn of 2008. Each business year a more detailed business plan will be produced.

HMICA's vision is to contribute to a better justice system through excellence in inspection. This vision is underpinned by a number of strategic aims based on the Balanced Score Card approach. These are set out in the plan. I am confident that these will enable the inspectorate to achieve excellence in inspection and in doing so contribute to a better justice system.

Excellent performance arises from a well-led, properly trained, motivated and valued workforce. These elements have always been a high priority for HMICA. The actions contained in this plan with regard to these issues are aimed at building on our existing strengths and driving improvement in areas where we can get better.

Our strategy is an ambitious one. With the commitment and support of all our staff, and through effective collaborative working with our partners in the justice system, I am confident it is achievable. I commend this plan to all who have an interest in achieving a better justice system.



HM Chief Inspector of Court Administration

August 2008

Our mission - what we do

HMICA's purpose is to inspect the courts, evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of administrative services delivered by them and identify areas for improvement. We are the only agency so tasked in legislation and are guided by the Government's Ten Principles of Inspection, with particular emphasis on the experience of the service user (see Appendix A).

HMICA was created by the Courts Act 2003 as amended by the Police and Justice Act 2006, as an independent statutory inspectorate for courts administration with responsibility for:

- inspecting and reporting on the system that supports the carrying on of the business of the Crown Court, county courts and magistrates' courts
- carrying out any other function as requested by the Lord Chancellor in respect of those courts.

In addition the Police and Justice Act 2006 requires us to work with other Criminal Justice Inspectorates to look at the end to end process and therefore improve the experience of all people who use or work within the justice system.

HMICA is not enabled to inspect person(s) making judicial decisions or exercising any judicial discretion.

We also respond to requests from Ministers, Government departments and agencies for advice, assistance and inspection activity.

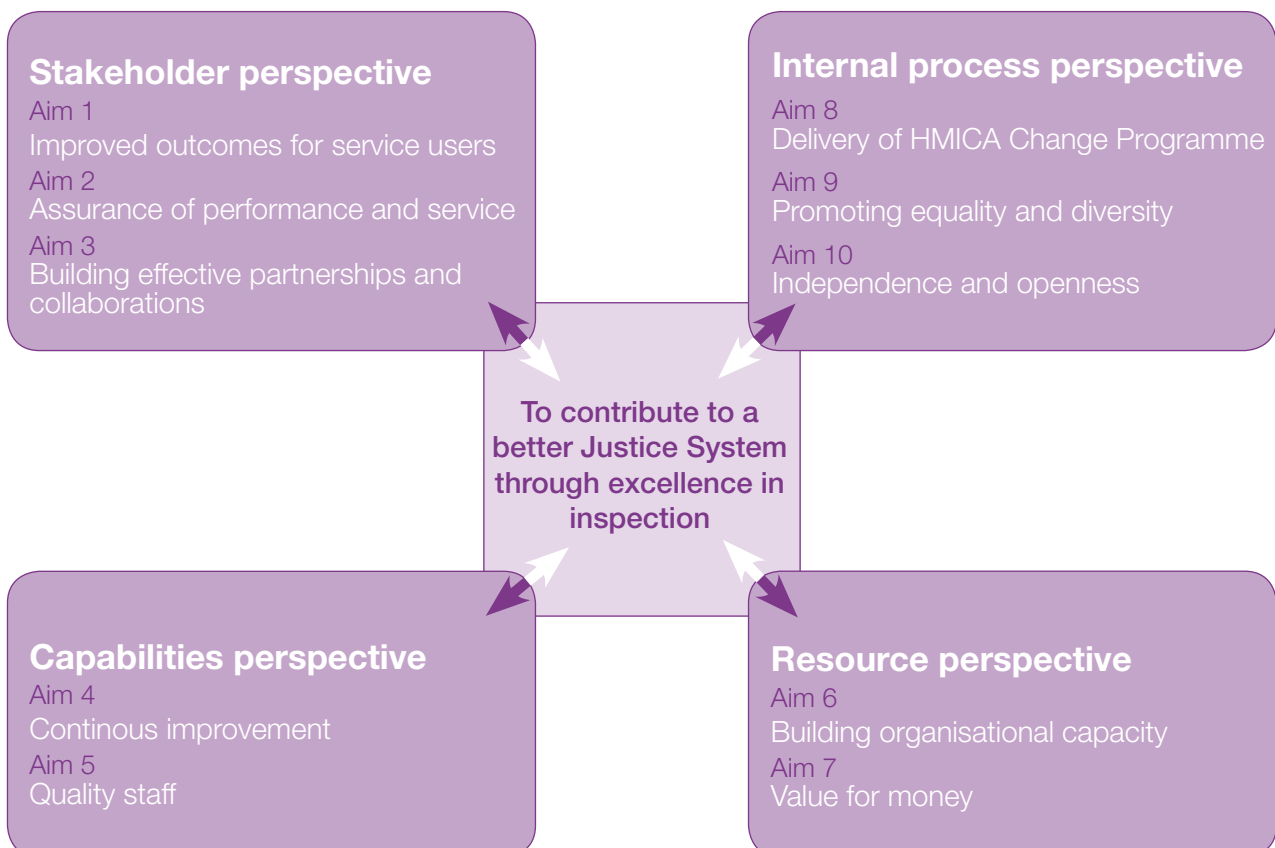
Our vision - what we want to achieve

To contribute to a better justice system through excellence in inspection

Excellence in inspection

Our vision can be seen in two parts: the outcome of contributing to a better justice system through the delivery of 'excellence in inspection'. This latter part of our vision encompasses the bodies we inspect, the staff who support and deliver inspection, the users of inspected bodies and our many stakeholders and partners in the process. It also covers the breadth and relevance of our inspection processes, the way we manage our relationships and networks, and the way in which we learn and develop as an organisation.

HMICA has adopted the Balanced Scorecard approach to strategic planning. This effectively translates our vision into a set of ten strategic aims supported by a number of goals that will be underpinned by a series of measurable operational objectives. This document sets out the strategic aims and supporting goals. By using the Balanced Scorecard we can ensure that the smaller-scale operational objectives are aligned with our strategic aims and our vision. We have identified four perspectives that encapsulate our strategic aims as illustrated below:



Stakeholder perspective

1. Improved outcomes for service users

Aim: To bring about improved outcomes for users of inspected services.

A central tenet in pursuing excellence in inspection is that the process must result in improvements for users of inspected bodies – that is why we are in business, to contribute to a better justice system. Improved user outcomes demand a level of engagement with service users that enable outcomes to be clearly defined and understood.

Increasingly the effectiveness of an organisation is defined by its relationship with partners. HMICA welcomes the requirement in the Police and Justice Act 2006 for joint working. We are fully committed to developing and maintaining effective relationships with partners in order to secure improvements for service users.

HMICA will:

- 1.1 drive improvement in outcomes for users of court services
- 1.2 engage with stakeholders and service users to understand what 'good outcomes' look like from their perspective and inform their understanding of our role
- 1.3 work collaboratively with the judiciary and partner agencies in the development and delivery of joint inspections.

2. Assurance of performance and service

Aim: To provide assurance to Ministers and the public that appropriate levels of performance and service are being delivered by the inspected bodies.

A key function of HMICA is to provide assurance as described above. In doing so, it is HMICA's responsibility to alert inspected bodies and Ministers to risk and to concerns that may result in poor performance or poor service to users that would be damaging to public confidence.

This will principally be achieved through an effective programme of inspection that is proportionate to risk and encourages rigorous self-assessment. The knowledge base acquired by HMICA will uniquely position us to offer appropriate advice in relation to the systems that support the business of the inspected bodies.

HMICA will:

- 2.1 develop and continually improve a framework that defines assurance and appropriate levels of performance/service, within which inspected bodies can be assessed
- 2.2 develop and undertake a risk assessed programme of inspections, increasingly based on rigorous self-assessment, that identifies problems/risks, spreads good practice, makes recommendations, evaluates progress towards them – and satisfies assurance criteria

- 2.3 alert HMCS and Ministers to risks that pose a threat to performance and service delivery within inspected bodies
- 2.4 be a key source of advice on courts administration to Ministers, stakeholders, other inspectorates, service users and inspected bodies
- 2.5 Increasingly become a key influencer in supporting evidence-based policy development in the Ministry of Justice.

3. Building effective partnerships and collaborations

Aim: To secure maximum benefit from the opportunities for partnership working and collaboration across all aspects of our business at both a local and national level.

We recognise that the courts HMICA inspects are part of wider justice systems. There are many different agencies that contribute to the effectiveness of these systems and improvement for service users will only come through effective and sustained joint working. HMICA will play its part in improving the effectiveness of the justice system through building successful partnerships and collaborations.

HMICA will:

- 3.1 seek positive engagement/relationships with:– Ministers, judiciary, MoJ officials and inspected bodies at both a local and national level
- 3.2 work collaboratively with inspectorates and other partners to secure improvements to the wider justice system.

Capabilities perspective

4. Continuous improvement

Aim: To actively promote continuous improvement in inspected bodies and within HMICA.

A philosophy of continuous improvement demands an organisational culture that considers change, rather than stability, the norm. Complacency with the current 'way of doing things' needs to be replaced by an ethos that promotes continuous quality and productivity improvement and moves an organisation towards optimum levels of service. In such a change environment, the importance of continuous improvement by all employees needs to be repeatedly emphasised and supported.

We will promote a culture of continuous improvement that challenges all levels of an organisation to:

- cut out activities that fail to add value
- carry out processes more efficiently
- make processes common and consistent
- develop processes that create value for service users.

Removing waste and working smarter involves developing processes that create value for service users – it is about putting them at the heart of the business.

HMICA will:

- 4.1 promote continuous improvement and self-assessment within inspected bodies
- 4.2 Pilot, implement, and continuously develop a flexible methodology and framework that is intelligence and risk-led and can be applied to any court administration setting.
- 4.3 develop a cycle of continuous improvement within HMICA.

5. Quality Staff

Aim: To maintain a highly motivated, diverse, skilled and knowledgeable workforce that values the contribution of all in the pursuit of excellence in inspection.

The key to delivering excellence in inspection is the quality of our staff. We have a very high calibre of staff; having attracted the right staff it is our responsibility to support and develop them, and provide a modern, stimulating working and learning environment.

In developing quality staff HMICA will:

- 5.1 recruit and retain excellent staff
- 5.2 support and develop staff knowledge and skills
- 5.3 support the overall strategy through an underpinning HR policy that recognises the departmental HR policy whilst meeting the needs of HMICA
- 5.4 develop and implement an action plan to ensure our equipment and IT infrastructure supports the needs of staff.

Resource perspective

6. Building organisational capacity

Aim: To build the capacity to respond appropriately to changing future needs.

HMICA is part of an ever-changing world. Changes in legislation and new requests for our services means that we must have the capacity to respond to a changing environment. We will always seek to have new responsibilities formally enshrined in legislation. We will also expect the appropriate resources to be allocated. We recognise however, that there may be interim stages where we carry out work by invitation on a cost recovery or similar basis.

The respect we have built with HMCS and Ministers has been achieved through the quality of our inspections and the difference they have made in the level of service delivered to court users and the ability to react quickly with limited resources. We will strive to achieve a similar level of respect with new stakeholders and inspected bodies as we respond to new challenges.

HMICA will:

- 6.1 build organisational capacity and resilience to respond to changing demands.

7. Value for Money

AIM: To ensure good choices are made across the inspectorate by underpinning all activity with a focus on value for money.

We acknowledge the pressure for public bodies to deliver more for less, requiring smarter, leaner and more cost effective ways of working. We will set ourselves new standards of performance, accountability and transparency as we commit to demonstrating value for money from all of our outputs.

HMICA will:

- 7.1 develop and implement a resource and financial strategy that underpins the strategic objectives and delivers value for money
- 7.2 develop and implement a model that identifies the costs and benefits of each inspection undertaken
- 7.3 operate within our allocated budget.

Internal process perspective

8. Delivery of HMICA Change Programme

Aim: To effectively deliver HMICA's Change Programme.

A strategic review of HMICA in 2007 drew up a series of recommendations that were accepted by the senior management team as necessary to take forward the work of the inspectorate. These were encapsulated in the Change Programme.

HMICA will:

8.1 Implement HMICA's Change Programme delivering changes in:

- Strategic planning
- Methodology
- Knowledge Management
- Evaluation
- People and Structures
- Communications.

9. Promoting equality and diversity

Aim: To embed equality and diversity as fundamental principles in HMICA and all inspection activity, assisting all staff to realise their full potential.

We are committed to the principles of equality and diversity and will strive to ensure they run through the organisation and all our inspection activity. We will be robust in commenting on the way inspected bodies have taken the principles on board in the spirit of the relevant legislation.

HMICA will:

- 9.1 develop a diversity and equality statement and policy
- 9.2 implement a diversity and equality action plan setting out objectives, outlining end and milestone timescales and responsible officers
- 9.3 ensure its commitment to diversity and equality is reflected all inspection activity.

10. Independence and openness

Aim: To conduct business in an atmosphere of openness and transparency, while maintaining independence.

The independence of the inspectorate is an important element of its remit but brings with it a responsibility to ensure reports, conclusions and recommendations are based on robust evidence to substantiate its findings. A key part of our responsibility is to work with inspected bodies to secure improvement and, in so doing, commit to being as open and transparent as possible to develop trust and secure the best outcomes for all stakeholders.

HMICA will:

- 10.1 continue to make independent judgements and base inspection conclusions and recommendations on robust evidence
- 10.2 work with inspected bodies to develop a relationship of trust and respect within a process that is wholly transparent.

Conclusion

HMICA's Strategic Plan covers the period 2009–12 and will be subject to continuous monitoring and review. Our aim is to ensure that implementation of the plan is achieved through a cyclical accountability process of monitoring, review, evaluation and, where necessary, refinement. The annual Business Plan will flow from the Strategic Plan from 2009–10 and detail the amount of resource allocated to the respective activities that seek to achieve our overall strategic goal. By using the Balanced Scorecard, we will effectively communicate our vision and strategic aims and link these to the performance of the organisation and individuals within it.

We have set out our vision of how, as an independent inspectorate, HMICA will contribute to a better justice system. This will be achieved through our area of influence of administration of the courts and by effectively working with our colleagues in the other justice inspectorates. As we seek to deliver excellence in inspection services we will improve outcomes for service users, offer assurance about levels of service and performance and be a champion of rigorous self-assessment and continuous improvement. As an organisation, we will further enhance our accountability and transparency as we equip our staff and develop our infrastructure to deliver excellence and demonstrate value for money in all our outputs.

Appendix A

The ten principles of inspection (taken from The Government's Policy on Inspection 2003)

The principles of inspection in this policy statement place the following expectations on inspection providers and on the departments sponsoring them:

1. The purpose of improvement. There should be an explicit concern on the part of inspectors to contribute to the improvement of the service being inspected. This should guide the focus, method, reporting and follow-up of inspection. In framing recommendations, an inspector should recognise good performance and address any failure appropriately. Inspection should aim to generate data and intelligence that enable departments more quickly to calibrate the progress of reform in their sectors and make appropriate adjustments.
2. A focus on outcomes, which means considering service delivery to the end users of the services rather than concentrating on internal management arrangements.
3. A user perspective. Inspection should be delivered with a clear focus on the experience of those for whom the service is provided, as well as on internal management arrangements. Inspection should encourage innovation and diversity and not be solely compliance-based.
4. Proportionate to risk. Over time, inspectors should modify the extent of future inspection according to the quality of performance by the service provider. For example, good performers should undergo less inspection, so that resources are concentrated on areas of greatest risk.
5. Inspectors should encourage rigorous self-assessment by managers. Inspectors should challenge the outcomes of managers' self-assessments, take them into account in the inspection process, and provide a comparative benchmark.
6. Inspectors should use impartial evidence. Evidence, whether quantitative or qualitative, should be validated and credible.
7. Inspectors should disclose the criteria they use to form judgements.
8. Inspectors should be open about their processes, willing to take any complaints seriously, and able to demonstrate a robust quality assurance process.
9. Inspectors should have regard to value for money, their own included:
 - Inspection looks to see that there are arrangements in place to deliver the service efficiently and effectively.
 - Inspection itself should be able to demonstrate it delivers benefits commensurate with its cost, including the cost to those inspected.
 - Inspectorates should ensure that they have the capacity to work together on cross-cutting issues, in the interests of great cost effectiveness and reducing the burden on those inspected.
10. Inspectors should continually learn from experience, in order to become increasingly effective. This can be done by assessing their own impact on the service provider's ability to improve and by sharing best practice with other inspectors.

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