

**Protect: Management**

**Draft CDN Press Release**

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## **Inspecting case administration in Her Majesty's Court Service (HMCS)**

Today sees the publication of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Court Administration's (HMICA) report, **Inspection of Cleveland, Durham and Northumbria HMCS Area**.

HMICA examined how well HMCS handles cases which pass through its courts in two of its major business areas - the criminal and family jurisdictions. In addition, HMICA looked at how HMCS makes effective use of partnership working to improve services for users. Particular attention was paid to the way in which judicial decisions at court hearings are recorded and passed on to other criminal justice agencies, who need accurate and timely information.

**Eddie Bloomfield, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Court Administration** said, "I am pleased to report that, overall, we found an organisation which is strongly led and, in the main, engages effectively with internal and external stakeholders to deliver many high quality services. The Area also demonstrated its effective management and development of staff and its high commitment to equality and diversity.

There were, however, two areas for improvement. First, we found poor levels of performance in respect of the timeliness and accuracy of resulting in some of the magistrates courts in CDN. Timely and accurate communications between the criminal justice agencies is critical to the effective operation of the justice system and public confidence in it. HMCS is in the process of responding to the urgent recommendation made in our recent report on **Criminal Case Administration and Resulting** (October 2009) that HMCS ensures that its court records (both for the magistrates' courts and the Crown Court) are produced in a timely and accurate fashion. As Cleveland, Durham and Northumbria HMCS Area will be contributing to the implementation of that national recommendation, it was not necessary to duplicate the same recommendation in this report.

Our second concern related to the absence of a proactive and systematic approach to ensuring that key developments, initiatives and processes were evaluated. This meant that the Area was not able effectively to identify and address a range of problems, such as those arising from the implementation of new initiatives, some

communication issues and the need for improved assurance processes relating to the resulting errors mentioned above. It also hampered the extent to which the Area was able to promote and promulgate good practice.

We have made a recommendation to address this issue and I welcome the Area Director's response in the form of a comprehensive action plan for improvement.

**Cleveland, Durham and Northumbria HMCS Area Director, Sheila Proudlock, commented:**

**“I am pleased that the strengths of the people who work in the courts in the North East are recognised in this report. Cleveland, Durham and Northumbria were amalgamated two years ago and good progress has been made in realising the benefits of that major change. The recommendations for evaluating and promulgating the good practice and closer working with our partners are accepted as future focus for our efforts.”**

**Notes for Editors:**

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**3.** Inspection reports are public documents. For copies of this and HMICA's other publications, including annual reports and thematic reviews, please contact Penny Rickards on 0113 394 3906 or visit our website at [www.hmica.gov.uk](http://www.hmica.gov.uk)