

**EMBARGOED TO**

**9:00am**

**21 JULY 2006**

## **HMICA: a successful first year to build on**

The first Annual Report of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Court Administration (HMICA) is published today.

HMICA was launched on 1 April 2005 with a remit to inspect Her Majesty's Courts Service (HMCS) under the Courts Act 2003 that embraces inspection of the Crown Court and county courts, as well as the magistrates' courts and the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS). The unified court service, Her Majesty's Courts Service (HMCS), also came into existence on the 1 April 2005.

### **Inspection work:**

Our inspections have identified much good practice in the courts.

Eddie Bloomfield, HMICA Chief Inspector since June 2005, says:

***'Although there were areas for improvement, overall HMCS should be congratulated for carrying on the business of the courts effectively during a time of significant change and upheaval'***

HMICA inspections since 1 April 2005 have focused on:

- The quality of service provided to victims, witnesses and defendants as users of the courts
- Continuing inspection of CAFCASS to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in family court proceedings. HMICA also published an important thematic review of *Domestic Violence, Safety and Family Proceedings* that had an immediate impact on parliamentary debates concerning the Children and Adoption Bill.

- Joint inspections with other inspectorates, especially criminal justice inspectorates, aimed at: improving confidence in the criminal justice system; bringing offenders to justice and reducing ineffective trials.
- HMICA also worked, by invitation, with the Criminal Justice Inspectorate of Northern Ireland to review delay in the processing of criminal cases, target setting and performance management.

### **Inspection reform:**

HMICA has contributed - and continues to contribute - fully to the development of government inspection reform policy.

The Government intends to reduce the number of public sector inspectorates. In early 2006, legislation was introduced to pave the way for:

- a single inspectorate of Justice, Community Safety and Custody
- a single Children's Inspectorate (The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills).

### **Looking to the future:**

HMICA has a challenging and varied programme of work planned for 2006-2007, developed in consultation with key stakeholders in the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA), Her Majesty's Courts Service (HMCS), the judiciary and Courts Boards. Joint inspections with other criminal justice inspectorates will continue, as will CAFCASS Joint Area Reviews.

The Chief Inspector says:

***'We look forward to building on the good relationships established with our colleagues in the other inspectorates as we work together towards the creation of the new organisations'***

End

## **Notes for Editors**

Copies of the Chief Inspector's Annual Report were laid before Parliament and placed in the libraries of both Houses on 20 July 2006.

**HM Inspectorate of Court Administration** – HMICA is headed by the Chief Inspector, Eddie Bloomfield. Inspectors are based in London, Bristol and Leeds. HMICA is independent of Her Majesty's Courts Service, the Department for Constitutional Affairs and the Department for Education and Skills. On inspection matters, Eddie Bloomfield reports directly to Lord Falconer of Thoroton QC, Secretary of State for Constitutional Affairs and Lord Chancellor and, for CAF/CASS, to Parmjit Dhanda MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children, Young People and Families.

### **Contact:**

Copies of HMICA's publications, including the Annual Report, may be obtained from:

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