

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **DORSET CRIMINAL JUSTICE AREA: REPORT OF THE JOINT INSPECTION**

HMICA is publishing a report today on how well the local criminal justice agencies in the Dorset Area work together to meet the needs of local people. The inspection, undertaken in October 2007, was a joint inspection led by HMICA and supported by HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPSP), HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) and HM Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP). The inspection looked in particular at the following three aspects:

- Leadership and partnership working in the Dorset Criminal Justice Board (DCJB)
- Delivery of successful justice in domestic violence cases
- Community engagement

Inspectors made five recommendations. These recommendations are concerned with:

- Ensuring that action plans identify people responsible, and appropriate timescales, for delivery
- Getting the right structures in place to support performance delivery
- Making sure messages from the DCJB are delivered to, and actioned by, all appropriate staff in the criminal justice agencies
- Ensuring that all agencies comply with the Dorset Domestic Violence Protocol
- Reviewing the DCJB community engagement plan to ensure it can engage effectively with all parts of the community.

Key findings include:

In general, Inspectors found that there is a clear vision and strategy in place for the future of criminal justice in Dorset, and that Chief Officers were committed to this strategy. There are also signs of an increasing robustness in the way the DCJB ensures that potential barriers to delivery are removed.

This commitment to joint working is not always replicated at senior management levels and more work needs to be done to ensure that messages from Chief Officers are acted upon.

The DCJB has implemented Specialist Domestic Violence Courts at both Bournemouth and Weymouth Magistrates' Courts. This was done in a short timescale and with the interests of justice in Dorset in mind. There is a comprehensive domestic violence protocol in place, although this does not include HM Prisons, and it is not always followed by the agencies.

There have been some operational challenges in the initial phase of implementation, although there are signs that these are being resolved. Inspectors observed some disparities in practice between the two courts, and consider that this may lead to a difference in the level of service provided by the courts.

The DCJB has a good communications strategy in place to assist engagement with the community. There have been some innovative attempts to engage the community, especially with groups that may be at risk of exclusion and discrimination. However, the DCJB needs to ensure that it engages effectively with the Dorset community.

Overall, the report shows that the DCJB has recently made significant progress in achieving effective performance against all its targets, including a continued impressive performance in bringing offenders to justice.

## Notes for editors

1. Local Criminal Justice Boards came into existence on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2003 and operate on a non-statutory basis. They are responsible for delivering targets at local level to support the achievement of national objectives to improve the criminal justice system.
2. Public Service Agreements (PSA) between HM Treasury and the relevant organisations set out the expectations that the Government has for the criminal justice agencies at a local and national level. A new set of PSAs has been agreed for the spending period 2008-11.
3. The Dorset Criminal Justice Board comprises:
  - Area Director for Her Majesty's Court Service (HMCS) for Dorset, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire – Chair
  - Chief Constable
  - Chief Crown Prosecutor for Dorset
  - Chief Officer, Dorset Probation Service
  - HM Prison Service Criminal Justice Liaison Manager
  - Manager, Dorset Youth Offending Team
  - Manager, Bournemouth and Poole Youth Offending Team

### Contacts:

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