



Press Release

Embargoed until 00:01 on the 22 August 2008

HMICA's Inspection report: *Aspects of County Court Administration in Lincolnshire, Leicestershire with Rutland, and Northamptonshire* is published today.

This is the second pilot inspection of the county courts conducted by HMICA. Eddie Bloomfield, HM Chief Inspector of Court Administration, said:

I am pleased to report that in LL&RN we found that county court users are treated with excellent and much appreciated courtesy. The county court facilities are generally good, and local managers and staff are committed to the timely completion of administrative tasks, and to enabling civil money claims to progress in a timely way. The Area's leadership was stretched in its first year by a range of factors, including budget and resource constraints and business unification issues. I am most grateful to the Area Director and his staff in Lincolnshire, Leicestershire with Rutland, and Northamptonshire, for the willing co-operation and support we had from them while undertaking this inspection.

The Area recognises the need to improve on weak planning processes in place for 2007/08, and to make performance management and improvement at Area level more effective. The Area has been taking steps towards a unified and more strategic senior management structure and needs to ensure that this provides

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sufficient strategic capacity for planning, analysis and action across the county courts business.

We have made a number of recommendations which are intended to help the Area to address the issues we identified. The five recommendations are that the Area:

- Develop prioritised plans for the implementation of key strategic objectives for the county courts
- Establish clear objectives and plans for equality & diversity
- Develop and implement a co-ordinated approach to dispute resolution in the county courts
- Ensure consistent, high quality information provision at county courthouses, and
- Improve arrangements for some aspects of health, safety and security.

I am pleased to say that the Area has accepted these recommendations and prepared an action plan to address them. Early action has already been taken on some points.

Richard Redgrave, Area Director, said:

“The civil courts in Lincolnshire, Leicestershire & Rutland and Northamptonshire are committed to providing the best possible service to our customers and partners and we are pleased the professionalism and commitment of our staff has been recognised by the Inspectors.

We are also satisfied the Inspectors recognised the challenges faced by the area during 2007/08 and we have accepted the recommendations made. Action plans are in place and work is in progress. We intend to learn from the inspection experience and continue to strive to improve our performance and the service we provide.”

For this pilot inspection of the county courts, Inspectors looked at the following:

- the Quality of Service for Court Users
- Civil Money Claims
- Proportionate Dispute Resolution (*diverting cases away from the courts that should be more appropriately resolved in other ways, through advice and mediation*)
- and Strategic Leadership in relation to these elements of the operation.

END

Notes for Editors

- This Inspection report is entitled: *HMICA Inspection of Aspects of County Court Administration: Lincolnshire, Leicestershire with Rutland, and Northamptonshire HMCS Area*. It will be available on HMICA's web site (www.hmica.gov.uk) from 22 August 2008. Inspection reports are public documents. Copies of HMICA's publications, including annual reports and thematic reviews, may be obtained from:

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