



Embargoed until 23 November 2007

Courts Service make progress with performance management

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Court Administration's (HMICA's) inspection report on how well Her Majesty's Courts Service (HMCS) manages its performance is published today. In the report the Inspectors make four recommendations for improvement, but they also publicise the good practise that they found.

Eddie Bloomfield, the Chief Inspector, says:

“For any organisation to be successful in achieving its aims, it is vital that performance management arrangements throughout the organisation are as effective as possible. People need to understand what is to be achieved and arrangements for leadership and development of staff need to ensure that it is achieved.”

Inspectors were looking for:

“The delivery of effective, efficient and improving services, which are relevant and appropriate to all court users, is supported and enhanced by a systematic, coherent approach to managing performance¹.”

¹ Quote taken from the HMICA Inspection Framework, on which HMCS was consulted.

And, in particular, they were inspecting to see if:

- appropriate performance priorities are identified and communicated and plans are in place that ensure effective delivery
- appropriate structures and functions are in place for managing performance
- staff and managers are given appropriate information and the support that enables them to manage performance effectively
- good practice is identified and shared
- HMCS works with partner agencies to improve performance across the Justice System.

Our findings:

Eddie Bloomfield, the Chief Inspector is:

“pleased to report...that HMCS has made real progress in its structures, processes and culture for performance management”.

But HMCS recognises that it has some way to go to move from a focus on the achievement of targets towards consistently improving service delivery and outcomes for service users. HMICA made four recommendations that HMCS:

- improve assurance that the approach to performance management and business improvement is consistent and coherent

- develop an informed and proactive performance culture
- evaluate the benefits of the various management structures and functions for performance management, taking account of the wider public sector context
- work closely with operational staff and other key stakeholders to develop systems, including Libra² - streamlining and improving communication, accountability, data collection and data quality.

HMCS comments:

Sir Ron De Witt, HMCS Chief Executive, says:

"I am pleased that HMICA has acknowledged the real progress that we have made to develop as an organisation and our commitment to developing a robust performance management structure and culture. We aim to continuously improve our service through a structured performance management framework, working with court staff and stakeholders to deliver the best possible service to our customers. The report has enabled HMCS to clearly focus on key issues and, with HMICA, we have drawn up an action plan to ensure we achieve our business strategy."

Next steps:

HMCS has accepted the recommendations and developed an action plan to address them. HMICA will measure progress against the action plan over a maximum period of 18 months.

ENDS

² The Libra project will replace the magistrates' courts existing information technology systems with a single, modern national infrastructure and case and accounts management system.

Notes for Editors:

1. Contact for HMICA:

Sandra Brown, Lead Inspector. Tel: Tim Paviour on 0117 959 8201.

2. Contact for Her Majesty's Courts Service:

Vincent Burke, Senior Press Officer HMCS. Tel: 020 7340 6698.

3. Inspection reports are public documents. Copies of HMICA's publications, including annual reports and thematic reviews, may be obtained from:

Tim Paviour, HMICA Publications. Tel 0117 959 8201 or order via our web site at www.hmica.gov.uk.
