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Inspecting the core business of Her Majesty's Court Service

Today sees the publication of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Court Administration's (HMICA) report, ***Inspection of Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire HMCS Area with focus on the administration and resulting of cases.***

This is HMICA's first inspection, using its new inspection methodology, to examine how well HMCS handles cases that pass through its courts in its three major business areas - crime, civil and family.

Eddie Bloomfield, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Court Administration, said, "I am pleased to report in relation to the Area, overall, that Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire is largely successful at translating its vision and objectives into outcomes. A strong leadership provides the bedrock for a clear culture of improvement and a commitment to high quality customer service. The Area demonstrates a particular strength in relation to its achievements in diversity and equality.

That is not to say that we didn't find areas for improvement. We found weaknesses in the Area's assurance structures and processes. These are key to ensuring HMCS processes, such as those relating to case results, are being undertaken effectively. In addition, we found a lack of effective performance management arrangements at Area level, which hampered its ability to maximise improvements in key business processes across the Area.

We have made recommendations for improvement to the Area in relation to both its assurance and performance management arrangements. The Area has put an effective plan in place to meet these recommendations and we look forward to monitoring progress over the coming months.

This was a particularly timely and relevant inspection, as it coincided with concerns identified by the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Area Director about administrative resulting processes at one of the Area's courthouses, Chesterfield magistrates' court, and we were able to give these particular attention throughout our inspection.

The public is entitled to expect that results of cases are recorded correctly and distributed in an accurate and timely way to relevant agencies, including the police. Our inspection of processes at Chesterfield magistrates' court revealed that there were weaknesses at all levels in the organisation's

management relating to resulting processes at this courthouse. We are pleased to note that positive steps have already been taken and further are planned to address outstanding issues at Chesterfield magistrates' court."

Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Area commented:

"We welcome the HMICA report and its positive endorsement of the overall strategic leadership provided within the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Area. HMCS is committed to continuous improvement of our systems and processes and therefore accept the HMICA recommendations. We have already taken action to address a number of the issues highlighted in the report and in particular immediate action to address the specific concerns relating to Chesterfield Magistrates' court. We have ensured our actions in response to the formal recommendations in the main report have been incorporated into our Area Business Plan and specific local delivery plans for 2009-2010."

Notes for Editors:

1. Contact for HMICA: Eddie Bloomfield, HM Chief Inspector of Court Administration Tel 020 3334 4180
2. Contact for HMCS: Mark Kram, Chief Press Officer for HMCS Tel 020 3334 6697
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