

Press Notice

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COMPASS CMS: REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE USE OF THE CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN THE CPS

HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPsi) has today published its report on the review of the use of the case management system (Compass CMS) in the Crown Prosecution Service.

The purpose of the review was to consider whether the CPS is making effective use of its integrated case management system to support its business, and in particular in improving the quality and timeliness of casework.

The review found that rolling-out the system within a tight deadline and according to budget represented a significant achievement on the part of the CPS. The Service is well positioned to take advantage of electronic exchange of data with other criminal justice agencies, as and when the police and courts in particular are further advanced with their implementation of national systems. However, variations in the approach to use of the system within different Areas and groups of staff mean that the CPS has not yet reaped the full benefit of the system.

Main findings of the report include:

- Access to electronic information has brought benefits to CPS staff by supporting the handling of casework and, when the quality and completeness of data input is high, increasing the ability to measure and improve performance.
- Implementing CMS required training of almost the entire CPS workforce, which was a considerable challenge. The system is embedded for administrative staff, but there is less consistent usage amongst lawyers and managers so that the benefits have not been fully realised by some Areas.
- CMS has enabled the CPS to deliver statutory charging (the scheme whereby the CPS provide pre-charge advice to police and have assumed responsibility for deciding whether proceedings should be instituted in all except minor cases).
- This and other initiatives have substantially increased the volume and diversity of locations that need to be served, with the result that the current IT network infrastructure needs to be upgraded.
- There is a need to improve the effectiveness of CMS as a tool for improving case progression. In particular the flexibility of the system (intended to accommodate variations in local working practices) needs to be tempered by standardisation of processes and appropriate policies which ensure that staff who are reluctant to use the technology are challenged. Without this, the full benefits of a single national case management system are unlikely to be achieved.

- The witness management system is being developed on behalf of criminal justice agencies to help improve the services to victims and witnesses. Further development and a more holistic approach to these issues will help ensure that victims and witnesses will get the best possible service, and CPS staff have user-friendly processes.

Inspectors undertook a survey and examined a sample of cases to establish whether staff are using CMS to full effect. This confirmed the need to improve the consistency with which prosecutors use CMS. Progress is being made, although it is gradual. Inspectors made eight recommendations and highlighted 21 issues requiring ongoing management attention to help the CPS overcome the barriers that currently exist.

Stephen Wooler, HM Chief Inspector of the Crown Prosecution Service said:

“Good quality casework is always dependent on the support of sound processes and systems. Having a single IT case management system offers many opportunities to the CPS and to the wider criminal justice system. There are clear benefits when the potential of Compass is fully exploited. For example, case decisions tend to be of higher quality where the reasoning and decisions are recorded fully and clearly. There have already been substantial achievements but work remains to be done to develop standard operating practices and raise the consistency of usage.”

A Summary of the report accompanies this Press Release.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. The aim of this review was to consider whether the CPS is making effective use of its integrated case management system to manage and deliver its business with particular reference to improving the quality and timeliness of CPS casework so as to deliver effective prosecutions within the 42 Areas. It sought to ascertain whether:
 - Compass CMS has contributed to improvements in review and decision-making;
 - Compass CMS has led to improved case handling and progression across the various structures and roles within the CPS;
 - The approach to change management has been effective in integrating Compass CMS into Area business; and
 - Compass CMS sustains continuous development of CPS business.
2. Compass CMS/MIS is the CPS national case management system and management information system. The contract for the development and management of Compass CMS was the subject of a tender process and was subsequently awarded to LogicaCMG. The system brings integrated automated support to both administrative and prosecutorial functions presenting significant challenges to professional work practices. The system was piloted in three Areas in 2002 and rolled-out to all CPS offices in 2003; it is regularly revised and since 2003 there have been two formal updates per year. Compass CMS represents the CPS's contribution to the CJS Exchange which will facilitate case transfer and automatic case status updating once allied case management systems are implemented in related agencies (the courts and police).

3. In 2005 the CPS developed the Witness Management System (WMS) to help support Witness Care Units introduced as part of the No Witness No Justice (NWNJ) initiative. This was carried out on behalf of the Criminal Justice IT Group as a multi-agency project. The availability of the national CMS system was a key factor in the decision to use the CPS and LogicaCMG to develop WMS.
4. The review has benefited from the use of the Issues Analysis Dinner Party™ (IADP™) technique. This is a tool developed by the National Audit Office for two purposes. First, it aids the scoping of questions at the planning stage of a review/inspection. Secondly, it assists in report writing by identifying the issues that are of interest to the organisation that is the subject of the review. The process was helpful in identifying the key questions and lines of investigation. As part of the process, assistance was provided by members of CPS Headquarters who participated at various stages of the process. The Chief Inspector is grateful for the assistance from the National Audit Office from whom experience was gained in the past, and the participation by CPS representatives.
5. The review took place between April and July 2006 with inspectors visiting eight CPS Areas for on-site interviews in May and June 2006.
6. HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate is an independent statutory body established by the Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate Act 2000, which came into force on 1 October 2000. The Chief Inspector is appointed by, and reports to, the Attorney General.

For further information please contact Andreas Harding, on 020 7210 1143 or 07901 856 348.

Embargoed copies of the Summary, this Press Release, and the full Report are available on the website at: www.hmcp.si.gov.uk/press/press.shtml. User ID is MEDIA and the Password is compass-thematic. After publication they will be on the site at: www.hmcp.si.gov.uk/reports/thematic.shtml.