



Joint inspection report published on Dorset criminal justice area

A joint inspection report has been published today, Tuesday 13th May 2008, which recognises the Dorset Criminal Justice Board's clear vision and strategy for the future of criminal justice in Dorset.

The joint inspection report published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Courts Administration (HMICA) focussed specifically on three aspects. These were leadership and partnership working in the Dorset Criminal Justice Board, delivery of successful justice in domestic violence cases and community engagement.

The report acknowledges that recorded crime in Dorset has fallen steadily since 2003, including substantial reductions in vehicle crime and dwelling burglary leaving them at their lowest levels for 10 years.

This joint inspection took place in October 2007, and since then the Dorset Criminal Justice Board has built on existing successes as well as addressing issues raised in the report to ensure that efficient and effective justice is being delivered to a high standard in Dorset.

Since this inspection took place the Dorset Criminal Justice Board has restructured and allocated areas of responsibility to each Board member to ensure the aims and objectives of the new Strategic Plan are delivered more effectively.



John Wiseman: DCJB Chair

John Wiseman, newly appointed Chair of the Dorset Criminal Justice Board, said: "The Board has placed a greater emphasis on working with our partners since this inspection took place. On Friday 29th February we held a successful partnership event which was attended by Chief Executive Officers of the local authorities, Dorset Fire and Rescue Service, all criminal justice agencies, Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships and both NHS Primary Care Trusts.

"The aim of this event was to build on existing collaborative arrangements and discuss how we can work together to make the communities of Dorset safer and to make them feel safer and build upon the high levels of public confidence and service excellence already achieved."

An example of successful joint agency working that has taken place in Dorset over the past 12 months has been the implementation of CJSSS: Simple Speedy Summary Justice. Representatives from Dorset Police, HM Courts Service, Crown Prosecution Service, Probation Service and local defence advocates have worked together to ensure quicker and more efficient justice is delivered in Dorset's magistrates' courts.

The joint approach to this project has demanded real leadership on the part of team members from each criminal justice agency, in working together to streamline processes. This has resulted in a marked improvement in the disposal of cases in court., with initial pleas at first hearing up from 66% to 85% and guilty pleas dealt with at first hearing increased from 47% to 80%. Moreover, a trial waiting time of 27 weeks in May 2007 has been reduced to less than 6 weeks for all but the most complex cases by May 2008.

As the inspection report outlines, Dorset was amongst the first areas in the South West region to roll out Specialist Domestic Violence Courts countywide to a very tight timeframe. These courts have provided a joined up service to vulnerable victims of domestic violence in Dorset and more work is under way to improve this service further.

The full report is available at www.hmica.gov.uk.