



Crown Prosecution Service:
**Response to HMCPSI and HMIC Joint Report on Effectiveness of
Digital Systems**

13 April 2016

HMCPST AND HMIC JOINT DIGITAL INSPECTION

CPS Response to the report:

Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPST) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary have today issued a report [13 April 2016] following their joint Inspection of the effectiveness of digital systems used to prepare and present cases in the Criminal Justice System ('CJS').

We are pleased to note the Inspectorates' acknowledgement of the significant progress that has been made towards a fully integrated digital CJS in a comparatively short period of time. There is recognition that the CPS has led digital working across the CJS through the presentation of cases at court by prosecutors using laptops and court screens for the showing of evidence. Positive comment is made about the roll-out of the Prosecutor App which enables prosecutors to use court-based WiFi to record hearing outcomes in real time allowing for the rapid updating of victims, witnesses and partners.

The CPS was also pleased to note the observations which the Inspectors made of the Crown Court Digital Case System ('DCS'). The DCS enables the judiciary, prosecution and defence to share, manage and edit case material on a digital basis in addition to the digital presentation of evidence at court. The Inspectors reported that:-

"In our observations at these court centres we saw preliminary hearings and (Plea & Case Management Hearings) being conducted wholly digitally".

The evolutionary and agile nature of digital development necessitates an incremental approach. The CPS will continue its intensive and detailed work through the 'Common Platform Programme' to ensure that a fully integrated and developed digital CJS is delivered by 2018.

Inspectorates' Recommendations

There are eight recommendations; seven of which relate to the whole of the CJS and one which relates solely to the National Police Chiefs Council. The CPS provides its responses below and will continue to work with CJS partners in order to deliver these recommendations:-

1. The National Criminal Justice Board ensures that the Criminal Justice Exchange is reviewed to ensure that its technical capability is fit for purpose for the needs of the criminal justice system.

CPS Response: The CPS will continue its detailed work into the development of the Common Platform Programme that will, in future, fully integrate digital working across all CJS agencies.

2. Police forces, CPS and Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service, undertake a comprehensive national cost and benefits assessment resulting from digitisation implementation. This should be informed by information from a local level.

CPS Response: The CPS has already captured significant information about the costs and benefits of delivering digital working and continues to collate this information. Only when the 'Common Platform Programme' delivers a true 'end-to-end' digital process will detailed financial analysis produce a full costs and benefits assessment of the implementation of digitalisation. The CPS will work with CJS partners to ensure that this information is captured and utilised as the programme develops.

3. The National Police Chiefs Council, Crown Prosecution Service and Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service ensure jointly that a solution is reached to ensure that all forms of evidence, including hard media, can be accessed by all Criminal Justice System partners and defence representatives by electronic means. This needs to be a priority to enable CJS partners to fully realise the benefits of the digital programme.

CPS Response: As part of the Common Platform Programme, the CPS is already working with its partners to create a unified digital case management system which will include a secure online store to which all forms of evidence (including hard media, such as CCTV and body worn camera moving images) can be uploaded, updated and accessed by electronic means.

4. All police forces and Crown Prosecution Service areas should, as a matter of urgency, jointly review arrangements for the provision, transportation and storage of hard media to ensure it is available securely to all appropriate individuals.

CPS Response: The CPS has reviewed its processes and developed a national standard for the handling of electronic hard media on an internal basis. Local CPS Areas have been asked to work with their local police forces to jointly review their handling and transportation of hard media.

5. The Police and the Crown Prosecution Service should ensure that a formally agreed common naming convention covering all document types is consistently applied.

CPS Response: The CPS has agreed a naming convention with police colleagues in relation to the majority of evidence, and work is continuing in order to reach agreement for the remaining case material. The CPS continues to work with the police to improve officers' understanding of existing IT systems to ensure that documents which are sent electronically are correctly 'named' in accordance with the agreed convention.

6. The Crown Prosecution Service and Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service should immediately review the introduction of hardware for advocates in court to assist in case presentation to ensure it is fit for purpose.

CPS Response: The CPS will continue to work with HMCTS to ensure that the equipment in court fully supports advocates to present cases on a digital basis to the court.

7. The CPS should co-ordinate a national strategy for providing Initial Details of the Prosecution Case and other case material to unrepresented defendants and those remanded in custody.

CPS Response: The CPS remains fully committed to the development of an end-to-end digital process. We will continue to work with police and HMCTS colleagues to ensure that all unrepresented defendants and persons remanded into custody have access to the relevant material in their case, and this work will continue through the Common Platform Programme.