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via: info@HMCPsi.gov.uk
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Dear Andrew,

I write this in response to your letter of 17th January seeking views on HMCPsi's 2024-25 inspection programme.

Firstly however, I want to take the opportunity to thank you for your service in this role, and to wish you all the best in your future endeavours. Under your leadership, HMCPsi has undertaken a significant programme of work which has supported the CPS in making major improvement over the past few years, for which I am grateful. I am also pleased to welcome Anthony into the role, and look forward to supporting him in his work.

I recently met with Anthony and other HMCPsi colleagues where we discussed some of this work, so I will just briefly provide my thoughts – which I hope is of help – on the longlist you kindly shared.

I am very supportive of an inspection into **victim communication**, which, as you are aware, is a perennial issue and sits at the heart of victims' poor experience with the criminal justice system. You may have seen our recent work on an [Open Justice campaign](#), which has brought a number of communication issues to light, such as victims being dissuaded by prosecution counsel from attending the trial after having given evidence, and even dissuaded from attending the sentencing hearing. We also continue to see important information like special measures poorly explained to victims, impacting their ability to make informed choices and deliver their best evidence.

We are currently working with CPS London (jointly with the Met Police) on how we can pilot new approaches to keeping victims engaged and supported. While the conversations are still in the early stages, the intention is to adopt a 'test and learn' approach where new ideas can be quickly implemented for a select group of victims.

Communication with victims will be a crucial part of this work, and so I hope that the CPS may find itself in a position to more quickly implement any recommendations that come from a future inspection in this area.

The inclusion of **legal decision making and handling of Rape and Serious Sexual Offence (RASSO) cases** is also welcome, given the significant investment that has been committed to making improvements in this area. The work of Operation Soteria has seen many successes and positive steps forward, and I hope any inspection would help us to better understand the impact of the work so far; highlight areas still in need of improvement; and where good practice could be applied to other crime types, with the CPS using RASSO as a pilot for some of their victim transformation work.

Following the successful implementation of many elements of Operation Soteria in the RASSO space, we welcome the proposal to focus on **Domestic Abuse** for inspection and a follow up on recommendations from the 2023 inspection. The inspection highlighted several useful victim-related issues including the use of restraining orders, special measures, and victim communications. As I hear victims also experience these issues in domestic abuse cases heard in Crown Court, it would be welcome if a future inspection could also look at the issues here. Further, I would welcome consideration for a joint-thematic inspection to provide a holistic overview of the issues. This would support the current Domestic Abuse Joint Justice Plan and increasing understanding of the interrelated reasons for the reduction in charges that we have seen since 2016.

Lastly on the longlist, I welcome the inclusion of a victim-focused **hate crime** inspection, particularly given the attention we have seen given to areas such as transphobic hate crime – both due to the increase in overall numbers of these offences, and due to tragic high profile cases such as that of Brianna Ghey. Disability hate crime should also be of significant focus, as victim satisfaction data shows us that victims who identify as disabled have significantly lower satisfaction than those of any other recorded characteristic. It may also be worthwhile considering this inspection in the context of recent and current protests, that led to a significant increase in reported hate crimes and arrests, and would be worthwhile seeing how these cases progressed with the CPS.

With regard to areas not explicitly covered on the proposed longlist, the policy of **pre-recording evidence – ‘Section 28’** – may be worthy of consideration. The policy has, since its implementation, been quite contentious, with differing views of victims, professionals, and the Judiciary. It is worth keeping this under consideration in any inspections that are undertaken.

Finally, I believe that a specific inspection on **stalking** should be undertaken. As has been [highlighted by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust](#), there are serious concerns over a significant lack of understanding in relation to stalking behaviours, which is leading to a low number of charges and even lower number of convictions.

Thank you for seeking my views on the inspection programme, and once again I want to wish you all the best moving forwards.

Your sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Waxman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Claire Waxman OBE
Independent Victims' Commissioner for London