

Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPsi) has today published its performance assessment of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) London, Barking and Dagenham borough.

This is one of a planned series of borough performance assessments of the units in CPS London. Reports on nine have been published today and those on a further ten boroughs, the traffic unit and an overarching report on CPS London as a whole will be published in March.

The overall performance assessment of Barking and Dagenham was **FAIR**.

The table below provides a breakdown of the assessed level of performance against the ten aspects:

Aspect	Score	Assessment
Pre-charge advice and decisions	2	Fair
Decision-making, preparation and progression in magistrates' court cases	2	Fair
Decision-making, preparation and progression in Crown Court cases	0	Poor
The prosecution of cases at court	2	Fair
Serious violent and sexual offences, and hate crimes	3	Good
Disclosure	2	Fair
Custody time limits	2	Fair
The service to victims and witnesses	2	Fair
Managing performance to improve	2	Fair
Managing resources	Not scored	
Management and partnership working	2	Fair
OVERALL ASSESSMENT	19	FAIR

The quality of decision-making was generally sound and the level of successful casework outcomes was encouraging, particularly in respect of magistrates' court cases and specifically in relation to offences of violence against women. Inspectors found that systems for progressing cases were starting to improve as were some aspects of case preparation. Nevertheless both preparation and progression need to be improved significantly in relation to Crown Court cases. Some aspects of the management of cases involving custody time limits, the prosecution's duty of disclosure of unused material to the defence and witness care, whilst adequate in general, also need to be improved.

The proportion of magistrates' court cases that resulted in a successful outcome in the 12 months to June 2009 (87.9%) was higher than that for CPS London overall (85.9%) and nationally (87.3%). The proportion of successful cases in the Crown Court (76.3%) was higher than London overall (72.7%) but lower than found nationally (80.6%).

Inspectors found that staff were mutually supportive and there was strong leadership committed to improving performance. There was a positive working relationship and joint management of performance with police locally.

Stephen Wooler, HM Chief Inspector of the CPS, said:

“Although we found the performance in Barking and Dagenham mixed, the borough has worked hard in difficult circumstances to maintain the quality of its casework. The borough faced significant resource constraints while implementing a number of national initiatives. It is now important to focus on casework performance, particularly in the Crown Court. It is encouraging that staff have remained supportive of each other during this period of change.”

This press release should be read in conjunction with the executive summary which is attached.

The full report is now available from the embargoed section of the inspectorate’s website (www.hmcp.si.gov.uk) using the following details:

- Username: MEDIA99
- Password: LBPAJan10

For further information please contact Anisha Visram, HMCPSI’s media contact, on 020 7210 1187/07901 856 348.

Notes to editors

- 1 HMCPSI was established as an independent statutory body on 1 October 2000 by the Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate Act 2000. The Chief Inspector is appointed by, and reports to, the Attorney General.
- 2 The pilot performance assessment of Croydon borough, published in May 2009, was the first of a planned series of performance assessments of the individual borough units in CPS London.
- 3 There are 33 geographical units based on London boroughs and the cities of London and Westminster. CPS London also has a dedicated traffic unit and a complex casework centre which handles serious and complex cases and those at the Central Criminal Court (Old Bailey). CPS London provides advice to police and charging decisions through a telephone service, CPS London Direct, or where a face-to-face meeting is needed through the local borough units. The units are gathered into six districts based on Crown Court centres.
- 4 The assessment process provides a benchmark for the performance of the boroughs in ten key aspects of work, each of which is assessed as being excellent, good, fair or poor. The unit is then assessed on its overall performance in the light of these markings. The process also evaluates the management of resources at borough level.
- 5 The scoring mechanism is described in annex C of the report. This provides some limiters that apply in addition to the total of points scored. This is because of the significant impact that some aspects will have on the delivery of the borough’s core business, or because of the impact of a number of poor aspects.
- 6 The assessment included examination of finalised case files; interviews with representatives of partner criminal justice agencies and the judiciary; discussions with borough staff; observations at the office; and observations at the magistrates’ court and Crown Court.

- 7 The findings from the assessments undertaken will be drawn together in a pan-CPS London report. As well as providing an overall picture of the area, this will address the issues that have emerged as the assessments have progressed. Some of these were of serious concern and need to be tackled urgently at a senior management level.

- 8 HMCPSI's original intention had been to assess all 33 boroughs in order to reflect the variations in performance which were expected across an area as diverse as CPS London, and this approach was endorsed by the area's senior managers. In the event findings from the early assessments showed a relatively narrow range of performance and consistency in the themes emerging and the aspects for improvement. London's senior management team confirmed that the boroughs which had been assessed were fairly representative of the area as a whole and that to undertake further assessments would be unlikely to add significantly to our findings. The inspectorate therefore decided to confine the exercise to 20 boroughs (including the pilot assessment of Croydon), drawn from five of the six districts, together with the traffic unit.