

# Press Release

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Tuesday 16 March 2010



## Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate

### CPS London Borough Performance Assessments

#### Hammersmith and Fulham Borough

Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HM CPSI) has today published their performance assessment of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) London, Hammersmith and Fulham Borough. It should be read in conjunction with the London-wide report also published today.

This is one of a planned series of borough performance assessments of the units in CPS London.

The overall performance assessment of CPS London, Hammersmith and Fulham borough was **POOR**.

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	0	Poor
Decision-making, preparation and progression in Crown Court cases	0	Poor
The prosecution of cases at court	0	Poor
Serious violent and sexual offences, and hate crimes	0	Poor
Disclosure	2	Fair
Custody time limits	2	Fair
The service to victims and witnesses	0	Poor
Managing performance to improve	0	Poor
Managing resources	Not scored	
Management and partnership working	2	Fair
<b>Overall assessment</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Poor</b>

Inspectors found that the quality of legal decision-making is sound at the pre-charge decision stage. There is pro-activity at the outset to build stronger cases. Subsequent weaknesses in casework handling manifest themselves throughout the process to trial or discontinuance; this may go some way to explain the relatively low conviction rates in the magistrates' court and the Crown Court.

The proportion of magistrates' court cases that resulted in a successful outcome in the 12 months to September 2009 (82.8%) has declined and was worse than that for CPS London overall (86.1%) and nationally (87.1%). The proportion of successful cases in the Crown Court (74.2%) was also in decline and lower than the national average (80.7%) although better than the London average (72.7%).

The systems for case preparation are not effective and the difficulties have permeated all aspects of casework including the discharge of the prosecution's obligation to disclose unused material and the management of custody time limits.

There is considerable duplication of work, late service of documentation and non-compliance with court directions and orders across all casework. Despite this the borough's effective trial rate is better than the national average in the magistrates' court which is due in part to advocates working hard at court to effect remedial action and ensure cases proceed when listed for trial.

The quality of advocacy is generally sound although advocates are hampered by the absence of papers, missing files and the deficiencies in case progression.

There has been considerable change at management level. Over the past year there have been seven borough crown prosecutors. There has also been a significant reduction in lawyers. The borough has some committed professional staff who remain positive in circumstances that could be demoralising and relationships with criminal justice partners are good.

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

**“Despite good decision-making at the outset and the commitment and professionalism of staff and managers alike, it is disappointing that the borough has not been able to build on these to deliver a quality service in the Crown Court and the magistrates' courts. The move to co-location with the police and the stability in the leadership, which have now been achieved, should provide a springboard to drive improvement, with help and support from CPS London centrally.”**

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

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

## Notes to editors

1. HMCPSP 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 borough performance assessment (BPA) 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 performance 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 the Crown Court.
7. The findings from the borough performance assessments undertaken have been drawn together in a pan-CPS London report which addresses the significant issues that have emerged as the assessments have progressed in order to provide an overall picture of the performance of the area. The report has also been published today along with nine other boroughs and the report relating to the traffic unit.