

Press Release

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Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate

CPS London Borough Performance Assessments

Barnet Borough

Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HM CPSI) has today published their performance assessment of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) London, Barnet 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, Barnet borough 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	2	Fair
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	18	Fair

The quality of decision-making is generally sound. The level of successful outcomes in magistrates' court cases is similar to CPS London overall. More attention needs to be given at the charging stage to ancillary matters, such as special measures for vulnerable and/or intimidated witnesses in giving evidence, and applications to admit details of bad character of defendants or hearsay evidence. However, case progression systems are weak and the fact that the borough achieves a rate of effective trials (i.e. contested cases which proceed on the day fixed for trial) which is close to the London average and is often attributable to late remedial action in the period immediately before trial.

The proportion of magistrates' court cases that resulted in a successful outcome (conviction) in the 12 months to September 2009 (86.0%) is similar to the CPS London average (86.1%) but lower than that for the CPS nationally (87.1%). The proportion of successful cases in the Crown Court (70.9%) is not as good as the CPS London average of 72.7% and well below the national average of 80.7%.

Some aspects of case preparation needs to improve. Instructions to advocates in the Crown Court lacked analysis of the case. The borough's compliance with the prosecution's duties of disclosure of unused material for the defence was reasonably thorough, but often done at a late stage. The borough systems for monitoring cases subject to custody time limits had been strengthened in recent times.

The borough has been co-located with police for some time and needs to develop its own performance management as well as working with police to identify where and how joint performance can be improved.

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

“The CPS in Barnet was assessed as fair across all aspects of performance except its Crown Court casework which was poor. This means that the public receives a generally sound service but with scope for improvement. That is particularly so in relation to the more serious cases which go to the Crown Court where case preparation must improve in order to reverse a sharp decline in the conviction rate. We found some positive signs of improvement which the borough will need to build on.”

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. 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 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.