

PRESS RELEASE

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HM CPS INSPECTORATE OVERALL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF CPS DYFED POWYS

HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HM CPSI) has today published their Overall Performance Assessment (OPA) of CPS Dyfed Powys.

The OPA process provides a benchmark for each CPS Area's performance in thirteen key aspects of work. Each of the aspects is assessed as being excellent, good, fair or poor. The Area is then assessed on its overall performance in the light of these markings.

The overall performance assessment of CPS Dyfed Powys was FAIR.

The table below provides a breakdown of the assessed level of performance against the thirteen aspects and provides a comparison with the 2005 exercise:

OVERALL ASSESSMENT		FAIR		
Critical aspects	Assessment level			
	OPA 2005	OPA 2007	Direction of travel	
Pre-charge decision-making	Poor	Good	Improved	
Ensuring successful outcomes in the magistrates' courts	Good	Good	Stable	
Ensuring successful outcomes in the Crown Court	Good	Good	Stable	
The service to victims and witnesses	Good	Fair	Declined	
Leadership	Good	Good	Stable	
Overall critical assessment level		Good		
Progressing cases at court	Good	Good	Stable	
Sensitive cases and hate crime	Fair	Good	Improved	
Disclosure	Fair	Good	Improved	
Custody time limits	Fair	Good	Improved	
Delivering change	Fair	Fair	Stable	
Managing resources	Poor	Poor	Stable	
Managing performance to improve	Fair	Fair	Improved¹	
Securing community confidence	Good	Fair	Declined	
OVERALL ASSESSMENT	Fair	FAIR		

The overall assessment for CPS Dyfed Powys (Fair) remains unchanged since the 2005 assessment. The overall trend has been one of significant progress with the improvement being reflected in the higher ratings in four of the aspects of performance. The Area remained stable in respect of six aspects but there was a fallback in relation to two, including the service to victims and witnesses. One aspect of performance improved but not sufficiently to lead to a changed rating.

The Area has worked hard to overcome the difficulties posed by the geographical distances between courts, officers and police stations. Its main difficulty has been the effective management of resources, and its general budget has been overspent in each of the last five years.

¹ Although the assessment for this aspect remains unchanged there has been a significant improvement within the range of performance covered by the band.

Main findings include:

- The overall conviction rate in the magistrates' courts remained broadly stable at 84.0% albeit marginally less than the national average. In the Crown Court, the conviction rate (78.7%) was slightly better than the national average.
- The Area has substantially improved the arrangements for statutory charging (under which the CPS has assumed responsibility from the police for the initial decision whether to charge in more serious and contested cases). It achieved the national target in respect of five out of six of the measures against the expected benefit, including a substantial reduction in the proportion of cases discontinued.
- The handling of casework is sound in both magistrates' courts and the Crown Court. The proportion of effective trials (contested cases which actually proceed on the day fixed for trial) is substantially better than the national average in both magistrates' courts (64.9% compared with 43.8%) and in the Crown Court (70.0% compared with 48.2%).
- The Area has strengthened its compliance with the prosecution duties of disclosure in relation to unused material and also its handling of cases involving custody time limits.
- Weaknesses in fulfilling its obligations under the Direct Communications with Victims Scheme (which requires a letter to be sent to an identifiable victim when a charge is dropped or substantially altered) substantially influenced a reduction in the rating for the service to victims and witnesses. However, the Area successfully established a witness care unit together with the police and this has underpinned improvement in some aspects of the care which witnesses receive.
- The Area has a team of experienced prosecutors and this has formed the foundation for the good quality of both volume and sensitive casework. This has underpinned the good conviction rates in Dyfed Powys.
- Handling of sensitive cases and hate crime is good, leading to outcomes which are significantly better than national performance.
- Overall, the Area is well led. It is now seeking to address its management of resources by reducing agent usage and creating more flexible working patterns. However, the fact that the Area is likely to be overspent again in 2007/08 is a cause for concern.
- Although the assessment was based primarily on 2006/07, there has been continuing improvement since that time.

Stephen Wooler CB, HM Chief Inspector of HMCPSI, said:

"CPS Dyfed Powys has worked hard to make significant progress since 2005. In particular, the quality of the Area's casework and partnership working continues to improve, and this should give the public increased confidence in its ability to help bring offenders to justice swiftly. However, the Area's continuing inability to manage its budget is a matter of concern,

The inspectorate has visited all 42 CPS Areas over a six month period in order to provide a benchmark from which future work can be informed. This summative report sets out on a comparative basis the assessments for all 42 Areas. It uses the outcomes of these assessments to determine where best the CPS should focus its resources in order to promote improvement within the CPS and the criminal justice system as a whole. It is also hoped that the CPS Areas, and CPS HQ, will use this information to address issues at local and national level where this is necessary.

Notes to Editors

Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPPI) was established as an independent statutory body by the Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate Act 2000, on 1 October 2000. The Chief Inspector is appointed by, and reports to, the Attorney General.

The Overall Performance Assessment (OPA) report is based on assessments and judgements that have been made by HMCPPI using a combination of absolute and comparative assessments of performance. These came from national data, CPS self-assessment, HMCPPI assessments and by assessment under the criteria and indicators of good performance set out in the OPA framework. The exercise has included visits to all 42 CPS Areas over a seven month period, between June and December 2007. Each Area is rated excellent, good, fair or poor.

The Inspectorate uses an assessment model which is designed to give pre-eminence to the ratings for 'critical' aspects of work as drivers for the final overall performance level. Assessments for the critical aspects are overlaid by ratings in relation to the other defining aspects, in order to arrive at the OPA. This assessment model is included in the framework and is available to all Areas.

This exercise is not a full inspection and differs from traditional inspection activity. While it is designed to set out comprehensively the positive aspects of performance and those requiring improvement, it intentionally avoids being a detailed analysis of the processes underpinning performance. However, it is designed to provide a benchmark from which future work can be informed. The Inspectorate will use this information to determine where best to focus its resources in order to promote improvement within the CPS and the criminal justice system as a whole. It is also hoped that the CPS Areas, and CPS HQ, will use this information to address issues at local and national level where this is necessary.

CPS Dyfed Powys serves the area covered by the Dyfed Powys Police. It's main office is based at Carmarthen. In the year ended March 2007 the Area employed 58.9 full time equivalent staff, and handled 10,227 cases before the magistrates' courts and 732 in the Crown Court. It also gave advice to the police in 1,526 cases which did not result in proceedings

This news release and the report in relation to CPS Dyfed Powys are part of a block of 13 individual Area reports published today together with a summative report drawing together the common themes and presenting the assessment for all 42 Areas on a comparative basis.