

Press Notice

Embargoed until 00:01 Hrs
Tuesday 16 March 2010



HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate

CPS London Borough Performance Assessment

Harrow Borough

Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HM CPSi) has today published their performance assessment of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) London, Harrow 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, Harrow 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	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	0	Poor
Disclosure	0	Poor
Custody time limits	3	Good
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	15	Poor

The quality of casework decision-making is generally sound. The level of successful outcomes in magistrates' court cases is slightly better than CPS London overall. Duty prosecutors are reasonably proactive in identifying steps necessary to build strong cases at the pre-charge decision stage, but the necessary steps are not always carried forward thereafter.

The proportion of magistrates' court cases that resulted in a successful outcome (conviction) in the year to September 2009 was 86.7% which was in between the CPS London average of 86.1% and the national average of 87.1%. However, in Crown Court cases the successful outcome rate in the year to September 2009 was 68.3%, lower than the CPS London average of 72.7%, and significantly below the national average of 80.7%. This is almost certainly attributable to inefficient and ineffective case preparation and progression systems.

The conviction rate in offences of violence against women is significantly lower than across London and nationally. The outcomes need to be analysed carefully.

The presentation of cases in the magistrates' court is variable. The reduced availability of in-house lawyers has contributed to an increased use of agents.

The prosecution's undertaking of its duties of disclosure of unused material to the defence is neither thorough nor timely. Additionally, applications for the use of special measures for witnesses, or the admission of bad character evidence, are too often late.

Direct communication with victims when charges are dropped or significantly altered is mixed and timeliness is an issue.

Performance management in the borough needs to be strengthened and more detailed performance analysis undertaken jointly with police.

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

“Although the current poor performance of CPS Harrow may be partially attributable to disruption linked to extensive management and structural change, there is a need for real and urgent improvement. Case preparation, particularly in relation to Crown Court cases, needs to be strengthened substantially; managers and staff need to focus on this and undertake some detailed analysis of the relatively low conviction rate. This should then translate into a more consistent standard of service delivery to the courts and the public in Harrow.”

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.hmcpai.gov.uk) using the following details:

Username: MEDIA99

Password: LBPA2Mar10

For further information please contact Anisha Visram, HMCPSP'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.