

Press Release

Embargoed until 00:01 Hrs
Tuesday 16 March 2010



Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate

CPS London Borough Performance Assessments

Hillingdon/Heathrow Borough

Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HM CPSI) has today published their performance assessment of CPS London, Hillingdon/Heathrow 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, Hillingdon/Heathrow 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	2	Fair
The prosecution of cases at court	2	Fair
Serious violent and sexual offences, and hate crimes	2	Fair
Disclosure	3	Good
Custody time limits	3	Good
The service to victims and witnesses	2	Fair
Managing performance to improve	3	Good
Managing resources	Not scored	
Management and partnership working	2	Fair
Overall assessment	23	Fair

Casework decisions are generally sound although the quality and depth of consideration of cases could be improved. The borough deals with cases from Heathrow Airport which can involve specialist issues of law and evidence. These are handled particularly well.

The conviction rate in cases involving serious violent and sexual offences and violence against women is poor although appropriate systems to deal with such cases are in place. Weekly surgeries are held for consultations with the police in rape and child protection cases

The proportion of magistrates' court cases that resulted in a conviction (84.2%) was lower than that for CPS London overall (86.1%) and nationally (87.1%). The Crown Court conviction rate (75.5%) was higher than for London as a whole (72.7%) but lower than national performance (80.7%).

The quality of case presentation is good. However, the quality of instructions to counsel in Crown Court cases needs to be improved by a more detailed analysis of case issues.

Compliance with the prosecution's obligation to disclose unused material to the defence is well handled as are cases which involve a custody time limit. There have been no custody time limit failures in recent years.

The service provided to victims and witnesses is mixed and could be improved in some aspects, particularly timely applications for special measures to assist vulnerable or intimidated witnesses giving evidence.

The borough has good performance management systems and performance information is considered internally and discussed with partners. The number of managerial and administrative staff has reduced recently following a wider area restructuring.

Managers carry out their responsibilities effectively. The borough crown prosecutor maintains a deliberately visible presence in the office and morale is good. A stable period of management has seen an improvement in relations with partner agencies.

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

“CPS Hillingdon & Heathrow is delivering a sound service against a background of resource constraints and the demands from the extensive changes generated by the London reform programme. Staff and managers alike share the credit for that. The progress reflected in the report needs to be sustained and built upon in order to improve the level of successful outcomes.”

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. HMCPST 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.