

Press Release

Embargoed until 00:01 Hrs
Tuesday 16 March 2010



HM CPS Inspectorate

Borough Performance Assessment of CPS London

Hounslow Borough

Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPsi) has today published their performance assessment of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) London, Hounslow 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, Hounslow 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	0	Poor
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	2	Fair
Serious violent and sexual offences, and hate crimes	0	Poor
Disclosure	2	Fair
Custody time limits	3	Good
The service to victims and witnesses	0	Poor
Managing performance to improve	2	Fair
Managing resources	Not scored	
Management and partnership working	2	Fair
Overall assessment	11	Poor

The quality of decision-making was generally sound, but overall the handling of casework was poor. The most appropriate charges were not always selected and possible difficulties not anticipated and addressed at the outset. Thereafter, timely case preparation for trial in both magistrates' court and Crown Court cases is weak.

The proportion of magistrates' court cases that resulted in a successful outcome (conviction) in the 12 months to September 2009 (87%) was better than that for CPS London overall (86.1%) and similar to those nationally (87.1%). However, the proportion of successful cases in the Crown Court, (70%), was lower than London overall (72.7%) and nationally (80.7%). Outcomes improved in 2009.

The borough needs to improve a number of aspects of its performance, particularly in being proactive at the charging stage in identifying the steps needed to build strong case as well as improving the preparation of cases for both the magistrates' court and Crown Court.

The service to victims and witnesses needs to receive a much higher level of care and attention.

There has been an increase in the borough's magistrates' court caseload of 20.5%, and an increase of 18.8% in those cases sent or committed to the Crown Court. The borough's performance is being hampered by its staffing levels and lack of resources to deal effectively with this increased caseload.

On a more positive note, significant improvements in dealing with custody time limits were notable, staff morale remains high and relationships with criminal justice partners are good.

The Hounslow borough unit, at the time of the inspection, was about to move to Hounslow Police Station to become an integrated prosecution team. It is hoped that this co-location with the police will be beneficial and improve levels of communication and the effectiveness of case handling more generally.

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

“The performance in CPS Hounslow borough needs to be improved substantially even allowing for the pressures and disruptions arising from the number of change initiatives with which it had to cope. Case preparation needs to be strengthened significantly, as does the standard of service to victims and witnesses. There are now some positive signs of improvement and staff have remained supportive of each other during this period of change. It is important that recent modest improvements in performance are sustained.”

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. HMCPSTI 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.