

Press Release

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HM CPSI overall performance assessment of CPS Hampshire and Isle of Wight

HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HM CPSI) has today published the overall performance assessment (OPA) of CPS Hampshire and Isle of Wight (the Area).

The OPA process provides a benchmark for each CPS Area's performance in 13 key aspects of work, each of which 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 Hampshire and Isle of Wight was GOOD.

The table below provides a breakdown of the assessed level of performance against the 13 aspects and provides a comparison with the 2005 exercise:

CRITICAL ASPECTS	Assessment Level		
	OPA 2005	OPA 2007	Direction of Travel
Pre-charge decision-making	Fair	Fair	Improved ¹
Ensuring successful outcomes in the magistrates' courts	Fair	Good	Improved
Ensuring successful outcomes in the Crown Court	Fair	Fair	Stable
The service to victims and witnesses	Fair	Good	Improved
Leadership	Good	Excellent	Improved
Overall Critical Assessment Level		GOOD	
Progressing cases at court	Fair	Fair	Stable
Sensitive cases and hate crime	Good	Good	Stable
Disclosure	Good	Good	Stable
Custody time limits	Fair	Good	Improved
Delivering change	Good	Good	Stable
Managing resources	Good	Good	Stable
Managing performance to improve	Fair	Good	Improved
Securing community confidence	Good	Good	Stable
OVERALL ASSESSMENT	GOOD	GOOD	

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

Some aspects have been categorised as critical; this is due to the significant impact that they have on the overall performance of a CPS Area and the service it delivers to the public.

The Area has successfully demonstrated a capacity to change and improve. Since our last OPA, performance in five aspects has improved and is improving in a sixth. Performance in other aspects has been sustained. Although CPS Hampshire and Isle of Wight has not progressed beyond the 'Good' category, there has been significant overall improvement.

There is strong leadership and nationally-driven projects such as the statutory charging scheme (whereby prosecutors are based in police stations to advise and decide on charges) and Witness Care Units, have been implemented successfully.

Casework decision-making is generally satisfactory and case preparation timely. In the magistrates' courts, the proportion of cases leading to conviction has continued to improve and is better than the national average. The number of cases discontinued has decreased and fewer contested cases fail to go ahead on the day fixed for trial.

The conviction rate is also improving in the Crown Court but still is not as good as the national average. The same is true of the proportion of cases abandoned by the prosecution in the Crown Court or where a judge rules that there is no case to answer. These factors mean that greater analysis of the Area's outcomes is necessary.

Hampshire and Isle of Wight continues to perform well, together with other criminal justice partners, in relation to persistent young offenders who on average were dealt with in 59 days from arrest to sentence, well within the Government's target of 71 days.

Successful outcomes in hate crime cases are better than the national average and specialist domestic abuse courts have been established.

Witness Care Units are working well although there is scope for improvement in the Direct Communication with Victims scheme, whereby the CPS write to a victim when charges are dropped or changed substantially. The Area continues to engage effectively with the local community.

Stephen Wooler CB, HM Chief Inspector, said:

"The managers and staff in CPS Hampshire and Isle of Wight can take considerable credit for the significant improvement found in five aspects of the Area's work. It has the potential to achieve excellence if it can strengthen the fair aspects of its casework without taking the eye off any other issues."

The Inspectorate is visiting all 42 CPS Areas over a six month period in order to provide a benchmark from which future work can be informed. A summative report will be published in early 2008 which will set out on a comparative basis the assessments for all the Areas. The outcomes of these assessments will be used to determine where best to focus Inspectorate resources in order to promote improvement within the CPS and the criminal justice system as a whole. It is also hoped that the Areas, and CPS Headquarters, will use this information to address issues at local and national level where this is necessary.

This Press Release should be read in conjunction with the Report itself (which contains an integral summary).

For further information, please contact Andreas Harding, HMCPSI Communications Manager, on 020 7210 1143 or 07901 856 346.

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 OPA report is based on judgements that have been made by HMCPSI using a combination of absolute and comparative assessments of performance. These came from national data, CPS self-assessment, HMCPSI findings and by measurement under the criteria and indicators of good performance set out in the OPA framework. The exercise will include visits to all 42 CPS Areas over a six month period, between June-December 2007. Each Area is rated 'Excellent', 'Good', 'Fair' or 'Poor'.
- 3 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 ones, in order to arrive at the OPA. This assessment model is included in the framework and is available to all Areas.
- 4 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.
- 5 CPS Hampshire and Isle of Wight serves the area covered by the Hampshire Constabulary. Its main office is based at Eastleigh. In the year ended March 2007 it employed 211 full-time equivalent staff, and handled 27,494 cases before the magistrates' courts and 3,741 in the Crown Court. Advice was also given to the police in 5,828 cases which did not result in proceedings.
- 6 This Press Release and the Report in relation to CPS Hampshire and Isle of Wight are part of a block of 12 reports published today. HMCPSI will publish three further tranches of reports covering the remaining 30 Areas.