

HMCPsi inspection of CPS Leicestershire and Rutland

Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPsi) has today published its report on the inspection of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in Leicestershire and Rutland (the area).

This was a full inspection following a "poor" marking in the overall performance assessment (OPA) in December 2007.

The inspection found that progress had been made against all of the weaknesses identified in 2007, in particular in raising the standard of casework and improving case outcomes and stronger leadership providing a clearer sense of purpose and enabling the area to regain the confidence of its criminal justice partners. The overall rating of performance is now **FAIR**.

Main findings:

- CPS Leicestershire and Rutland used the recommendations of the inspection in April 2007 and the findings of the OPA that December as a blueprint for change and refocused activity to address the identified weaknesses.
- Senior managers have instilled in staff a sense of pride and a determination to improve, and have ensured effective implementation of major change initiatives.
- The quality of casework has improved and a more proactive approach to charging decisions, including review of unused material in likely summary trial cases, has helped to improve case outcomes.
- Revised systems and processes are beginning to result in better case handling, improved case outcomes and a greater proportion of effective trials in the magistrates' courts (ie cases which proceed to trial on the day fixed).
- Successful outcomes in the magistrates' courts increased by 5.4% since the OPA and there is a continuing trend of improvement.
- In the Crown Court successful outcomes have increased by 7.4% since the OPA and are now in the top quartile nationally. However case progression arrangements need to improve further.
- The number of defendants discharged at the committal stage because the prosecution is not ready to proceed and is refused an adjournment (or does not apply because it anticipates a refusal) has increased significantly but action is being taken to address the problem with police partners.
- There is mixed performance in handling the most serious and sensitive casework. Outcomes in respect of hate crimes are excellent although performance in rape cases has been poor.
- Victim and witness care has been improved, including communication with victims, and structures are in place to make further improvements.
- An effective performance management regime is now in place and tighter control of working arrangements has been particularly effective in improving performance.

- Area partnerships have improved and an effective engagement strategy ensures proactive staff engagement with the local community.

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

"I am pleased that the area has built positively on the findings of the last inspection and its 2007 overall performance assessment to bring about significant improvement in a short space of time. The determination of the staff and their attitude of wanting to achieve excellence will, I am sure, enable the area to build upon the performance improvements already achieved".

This press release should be read in conjunction with the report itself and the executive summary which is integral to it and also available separately.

Notes for editors

HMCPSI is an independent statutory body established by the Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate Act 2000, which came into force on 1 October 2000. The Chief Inspector is appointed by, and reports to, the Attorney General.

This inspection included detailed scrutiny of finalised case files and some current cases were observed at court. Inspectors considered a wide aspect of work including decision-making and case handling together with the systems, management and structured monitoring of performance which underpin good casework.

The inspection team comprised legal and business management inspectors working closely together, along with a lay inspector who helped examine the way in which the CPS relates to the public in dealing with witnesses and victims, engagement with the community including minority groups, handling of complaints and application of the public interest test in the Code for Crown Prosecutors.

Leicestershire and Rutland is one of 42 CPS areas, each of which has a chief crown prosecutor, and serves the area covered by the Leicestershire Constabulary. It deals with criminal cases at Coalville, Hinckley, Loughborough, Market Harborough, Melton Mowbray and Oakham Magistrates' Courts and at the Crown Court sitting at Leicester.