

HMCP*SI* overall performance assessment of CPS Lincolnshire

HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCP*SI*) has today published the overall performance assessment (OPA) of CPS Lincolnshire (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 Lincolnshire was Excellent.

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	Good	Good	Stable
Ensuring successful outcomes in the Crown Court	Fair	Good	Improved
The service to victims and witnesses	Good	Good	Stable
Leadership	Good	Good	Improved ¹
Overall critical assessment level		GOOD	
Progressing cases at court	Fair	Good	Improved
Sensitive cases and hate crime	Fair	Good	Improved
Disclosure	Fair	Excellent	Improved
Custody time limits	Fair	Good	Improved
Delivering change	Fair	Good	Improved
Managing resources	Poor	Fair	Improved
Managing performance to improve	Fair	Excellent	Improved
Securing community confidence	Fair	Good	Improved
OVERALL ASSESSMENT	Fair	EXCELLENT	

¹ Although the assessment for this aspect remains unchanged there has been a 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.

CPS Lincolnshire has made considerable improvements in most aspects of performance since the last OPA. The intervening period has been one of greater stability following the appointment of a new Chief Crown Prosecutor at the beginning of 2006. An effective performance management system, which includes robust operation of the Casework Quality Assurance scheme, has helped to ensure good conviction rates in both the magistrates' courts and the Crown Court and they continue to improve. Experienced prosecutors provide pre-charge decisions to the police of a high quality, although only a quarter of all decisions are provided through face-to-face consultation and this needs to improve.

Case progression arrangements have ensured that cases are taken forward quickly in the magistrates' and the Crown Court and cracked and ineffective trial rates (cases fixed for contested hearing which do not proceed on the appointed day) are better than the national average. Casework handling processes are sound and recent action to improve performance against the persistent young offender pledge has seen a steady reduction (improvement) over the year to 50 days from arrest to sentence, against the Government target of 71 days.

Clear change management structures and a more systematic approach to reviewing plans have helped in implementing recent national and local initiatives, including the setting up of a Specialist Domestic Violence Court and the Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel.

The Area provides a good service to victims and witnesses.

Despite some changes in composition since the last OPA, senior managers promote a corporate and inclusive approach to management and Area managers work well with criminal justice partners. There is a high level of commitment to community engagement from all staff.

Stephen Wooler CB, HM Chief Inspector, said:

"I congratulate the Area on achieving the 'Excellent' assessment. It flows from a significant overall improvement in performance in CPS Lincolnshire which reflects not only the commitment of senior managers, but also the dedication and hard work of all staff. Changes within the CPS nationally and the wider criminal justice system will continue to present challenges. However, there now exists within the Area the framework with which to meet them."

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.

The report is now available to journalists from the embargoed press copies page on the Inspectorate's website (www.hmcpsi.gov.uk/press/press.shtml) and can be accessed using these details:

USERNAME: MEDIA
PASSWORD: pic5#Lon

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

Notes to Editors

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.

The OPA report is based on judgements that have been made by HMCPSP using a combination of absolute and comparative assessments of performance. These came from national data, CPS self-assessment, HMCPSP 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'.

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.

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.

CPS Lincolnshire serves the area covered by the Lincolnshire Police. Its main office is based at Lincoln. In the year ended March 2007 the Area employed 69.9 full-time equivalent staff and handled 13,924 cases before the magistrates' courts and 975 in the Crown Court. Advice was also given to the police in 2,056 cases which did not result in proceedings.

This Press Release and the Report in relation to CPS Lincolnshire are part of a block of nine reports published today. HMCPSP has already published two tranches relating to 22 Areas, and will publish one further tranche of reports covering the remaining Areas.