

## HM CPSI overall performance assessment of CPS Norfolk

HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HM CPSI) has today published the overall performance assessment (OPA) of CPS Norfolk (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 Norfolk 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:

<b>Critical aspects</b>	<b>Assessment level</b>		
	<b>OPA 2005</b>	<b>OPA 2007</b>	<b>Direction of travel</b>
Pre-charge decision-making	Good	<b>Good</b>	<b>Stable</b>
Ensuring successful outcomes in the magistrates' courts	Good	<b>Good</b>	<b>Stable</b>
Ensuring successful outcomes in the Crown Court	Good	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Improved</b>
The service to victims and witnesses	Good	<b>Good</b>	<b>Stable</b>
Leadership	Fair	<b>Good</b>	<b>Improved</b>
<b>Overall critical assessment level</b>		<b>GOOD</b>	
Progressing cases at court	Good	<b>Good</b>	<b>Stable</b>
Sensitive cases and hate crime	Good	<b>Good</b>	<b>Stable</b>
Disclosure	Good	<b>Good</b>	<b>Stable</b>
Custody time limits	Fair	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Stable</b>
Delivering change	Fair	<b>Good</b>	<b>Improved</b>
Managing resources	Good	<b>Good</b>	<b>Stable</b>
Managing performance to improve	Good	<b>Good</b>	<b>Improved<sup>1</sup></b>
Securing community confidence	Good	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Declined</b>
<b>OVERALL ASSESSMENT</b>	Good	<b>EXCELLENT</b>	

<sup>1</sup> 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.

CPS Norfolk has successfully demonstrated its capacity to implement change and to improve. Since our last OPA its overall assessment has moved from 'Good' to 'Excellent'. Within this, performance has improved in four of the underlying aspects while remaining stable in eight. However, it has declined in one (securing community confidence).

The Area has good leadership and nationally-driven projects such as the statutory charging scheme (whereby crown prosecutors have taken over responsibility from the police for the decision to charge in more serious or contested cases) and Witness Care Units have been implemented successfully. More recently conditional cautioning is being implemented, which involves prosecutors issuing cautions with conditions attached for some relatively 'low level' criminal offences, and the Area is in the process of rolling-out the Government's Criminal Justice: Simple, Speedy Summary initiative, designed to speed up the time taken by cases in the magistrates' courts.

Statutory charging is well established across the county and a good level of benefits are being realised as a result of this. The CPS is taking action to increase the proportion of advice provided to police officers on a face-to-face basis, but continued work is needed.

In magistrates' courts cases the standard of review is sound and preparation timely. There are effective arrangements in place with other criminal justice agencies for progressing cases. The proportion of cases resulting in conviction is increasing and better than the national average. The rate of effective trials (contested cases that proceed on the day fixed for trial) continues to improve.

In Crown Court cases there is a good standard of case review and preparation. The conviction rate has improved since our last OPA and in 2006-07 was one of the best in the country. The rates of judge ordered and judge directed acquittals are also significantly better than national averages, as is the effective trial rate.

The target for dealing with persistent young offenders speedily is one that the CPS shares with partners. There was a significant fall off in performance in 2006-07, which has since been addressed and is back on track.

Good efforts have been made to improve compliance with the Direct Communication with Victims scheme, whereby prosecutors write to victims when a charge is discontinued or substantially altered explaining the reasons for this. Performance in this aspect is now very good. The level of service provided by the Witness Care Units improved in 2006-07, and partner agencies surveyed were generally positive about the service provided to victims and witnesses. However, there are some concerns that progress has stalled as a result of the recent amalgamation of the four units into a single one.

Successful outcomes in sensitive and hate crime cases are excellent and performance has continued to improve since our last OPA. The system of case allocation ensures that sensitive cases are handled by a prosecutor with appropriate expertise and experience.

Stephen Wooler CB, HM Chief Inspector, said:

*"I am pleased that managers and staff in CPS Norfolk have achieved strong all round performance, and that the work and case outcomes in the more serious type of cases dealt with in the Crown Court is excellent. The Area will now want to focus on improving its service to the people of Norfolk even further through strengthening its victim and witness care and by engaging with all sectors of the community"*

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.hmcp.si.gov.uk/press/press.shtml](http://www.hmcp.si.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**

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.

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'.

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 Norfolk serves the area covered by the Norfolk Constabulary. Its one office is based at Norwich. In the year ended March 2007 the Area employed 88 full-time equivalent staff and handled 14,010 cases before the magistrates' courts and 1,468 in the Crown Court. Advice was also given to the police in 3,149 cases which did not result in proceedings.

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