

## HM CPSI overall performance assessment of CPS North Yorkshire

HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HM CPSI) has today published the overall performance assessment (OPA) of CPS North Yorkshire (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 North Yorkshire was Fair.

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	Fair	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Stable</b>
Ensuring successful outcomes in the magistrates' courts	Fair	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Stable</b>
Ensuring successful outcomes in the Crown Court	Fair	<b>Good</b>	<b>Improved</b>
The service to victims and witnesses	Good	<b>Good</b>	<b>Improved<sup>1</sup></b>
Leadership	Good	<b>Good</b>	<b>Stable</b>
<b>Overall critical assessment level</b>		<b>Good</b>	
Progressing cases at court	Good	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Declined</b>
Sensitive cases and hate crime	Good	<b>Good</b>	<b>Stable</b>
Disclosure	Excellent	<b>Good</b>	<b>Declined</b>
Custody time limits	Good	<b>Good</b>	<b>Stable</b>
Delivering change	Good	<b>Good</b>	<b>Stable</b>
Managing resources	Fair	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Declined<sup>2</sup></b>
Managing performance to improve	Good	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Declined</b>
Securing community confidence	Good	<b>Good</b>	<b>Improved<sup>1</sup></b>
<b>OVERALL ASSESSMENT</b>	Good	<b>FAIR</b>	

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

2 This is an overall assessment. Recent performance suggests that sustainable improvement is now achievable.

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 undergone significant structural changes since the last OPA; despite these, and the difficulties inherent in having to cover four Crown Court centres and six magistrates' courts, it maintained or strengthened its position in nine of the 13 aspects. Since the last OPA, staff levels and budget have increased. In the magistrates' courts the caseload has fallen, but in the Crown Court it has risen.

Confidence in the ability of the criminal justice system in North Yorkshire to bring offenders to justice grew in 2006 to 43.2%, in the face of a falling trend nationally (42.3%). Other key measures, such as ineffective trial (contested cases which do not proceed to trial on the date fixed) and successful outcome (convictions) rates, also improved. In the magistrates' courts, whilst the overall conviction rate (84.5%) was marginally better than nationally, the percentage of cases discontinued was worse than the national average, and there are a significant number of cases dropped on public interest grounds. In the Crown Court, the overall conviction rate (79.6%) was better than nationally. In all cases, there is room to improve how the Area prepares and manages its cases, and learns lessons from adverse case results.

North Yorkshire is comfortably out-performing the national target and national average for timeliness of cases involving persistent young offenders. There is also strong performance on confiscation of criminal assets, and in cases involving domestic violence allegations. Sensitive cases are usually handled well. There is a need to ensure that applications for special measures for witnesses are timely, but generally, victims and witnesses receive a good service.

Whilst the Area needs to work more closely with the police on joint delivery issues, generally the relationships between the CPS and other agencies are good.

More focus is needed on resource management. Financial controls have strengthened, but the Area has for the past seven years consistently overspent its budget and did so again in 2006-07, by 4%. There are recent signs of sustainable improvement in financial management, but this cannot outweigh the overall poor assessment for the majority of the relevant period.

Stephen Wooler CB, HM Chief Inspector, said:

*"CPS North Yorkshire has delivered some key improvements in 2006-07 and is aware of the blockages in case preparation and progression which threaten to undermine the casework outcomes. Improved joint working and a structured approach to change and project management, together with the maintenance of the budgetary controls, should assist in ensuring that the progress continues."*

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) and is available on our website at [www.hmcpai.gov.uk](http://www.hmcpai.gov.uk).

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 North Yorkshire serves the area covered by the North Yorkshire Police. Its main office is based at York. In the year ended March 2007 it employed 71.1 full-time equivalent staff, and handled 10,788 cases before the magistrates' courts and 1,344 in the Crown Court. Advice was given to the police in 3,812 cases which did not result in proceedings.

This Press Release and the Report in relation to CPS North Yorkshire are part of a block of ten reports published today. HMCPSI will publish two further tranches of reports covering the remaining 20 Areas.