

Press Notice

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CPS Inspectorate Overall Performance Assessment of CPS Bedfordshire

HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HM CPSI) has today published their Overall Performance Assessment (OPA) of CPS Bedfordshire.

The OPA process provides a benchmark for each CPS Area's performance in fourteen key aspects of work. Each of the aspects 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 Bedfordshire was **poor**.

The table below provides a breakdown of the assessed level of performance against the fourteen aspects:

Critical Aspects	Assessment
Pre-charge decision-making	poor
Ensuring successful outcomes	poor
Leadership	fair
The service to victims and witnesses	good
Resource management	good
Other Defining Aspects	
Managing magistrates' courts cases	fair
Managing Crown Court cases	good
Handling sensitive cases and hate crimes	fair
Custody time limits	fair
Disclosure	fair
Presenting and progressing cases at court	good
Delivering change	fair
Managing performance to improve	fair
Securing community confidence	poor

Some aspects have been categorised as critical, and these aspects are weighted differently to the other aspects in determining the overall performance of an Area. This is due to the significant impact that these aspects will have on the overall performance of a CPS Area.

The casework in CPS Bedfordshire shows a wide variation in performance between the magistrates' courts and the Crown Court. The Area had a mixed year in 2004/5 in terms of case outcomes. Although there was an increase (3.75%) in the actual number of convictions, the proportion of cases which had successful outcomes fell well short of the Area target and showed a

decline over previous years. This was despite a number of examples of good joint work, particularly with the police, in an attempt to improve outcomes.

The Area's service to victims and witnesses is generally good. Implementation of the national No Witness No Justice initiative (involving the setting up of witness care units) is on target; assisted by a good working relationship with the Witness Service. However, compliance with the Direct Communications with Victims scheme is not consistent and monitoring systems do not identify all cases within the scheme. The assumption of responsibility for the initial decision whether to charge (hither to a matter for the police) had limited positive impact but is progressing.

Throughout the past two years the Area has maintained a strong focus on its running costs budget and has performed well in this respect. Higher Court Advocates are deployed well in the Crown Court. Implementation of the Proceeds of Crime Act (confiscation of assets) also showed more successful planning.

The inspectorate has visited all 42 CPS Areas over a six month period in order to provide a benchmark from which future work can be informed. The inspectorate will use this information to determine where best to focus its resources in order to promote improvement within the CPS and the criminal justice system as a whole. It is also hoped that the CPA Areas, and CPS HQ, will use this information to address issues at local and national level where this is necessary.

Stephen Wooler, Chief Inspector of the CPS, said:

“CPS Bedfordshire’s poor performance was affected, in part, by a number of factors with some being outside their control. The increased budget provision for the current year (19%) will facilitate higher staffing. The Area will have an opportunity to implement, reinvigorate or re-introduce important national initiatives and achieve better results. I hope it will be able to turn a corner and improve in the coming year.”

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