

Press Notice

Embargoed until 00:01 14 March 2006



CPS London

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

The OPA process provides a benchmark for each CPS Area's performance in fourteen aspects of work, five of which are categorised as critical. 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. CPS London comprises four sectors and each has been the subject of a full assessment which have been collated and considered with evidence relating to aspects of work that are managed centrally. This process has enabled HM CPSI to make an overall assessment for CPS London.

The overall performance assessment of CPS London was **Fair**.

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

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

The critical aspects are those that have a particularly significant impact on the overall performance of a CPS Area. They are weighted differently from the other aspects in determining the overall performance of an Area.

CPS London is divided into three geographically based sectors and one which deals with serious casework. It serves all the London Boroughs and the Cities of Westminster and London. It deals with a particularly wide range of cases,

with a high number at the more serious end of the scale. It is by far the biggest CPS Area, accounting for about 20% of the national caseload.

CPS London's performance improved significantly in 2004-05 in many aspects, albeit from an historically low baseline. The rate of ineffective trials (i.e. cases listed for a contested hearing which do not proceed on the day fixed and are postponed) has improved, and the overall discontinuance rate is better than the national average.

Homicide and other serious cases tried at the Central Criminal Court are handled well. However, overall conviction rates are not as good as nationally, and some aspects of casework need to improve. These include in particular compliance with custody time limits, the prosecution's duties of disclosure in relation to unused material, the handling of cases to be committed to the Crown Court and those involving persistent young offenders. The number of cases which should be committed to the Crown Court but are discharged because the prosecution are not ready is a particular problem.

Good progress has been made in engaging with the diverse communities in London, and public confidence in the effectiveness of the criminal justice agencies' ability to bring offenders to justice is comparatively high. Partnership working has improved significantly. Performance varies considerably between boroughs, but overall CPS London is well led and is now firmly on track in an improving direction.

Stephen Wooler, HM Chief Inspector of the CPS, said:

"I am pleased to be able to report on the improved management and performance of CPS London. In particular, impressive progress has been made in reducing the use of agents in the magistrates' courts across the Area. There remains much work to be done by way of further improvement and there is a clear determination to deliver that."

The report is now available to journalists on an embargoed basis by visiting the Inspectorate's website (www.hmcp.si.gov.uk) which contains an embargoed section for the media. It may be accessed by using the following details:

- Username: MEDIA
- Password: OPAS2

For further information, please contact HMCPSI Communications Section, on 020 7210 1143. If the query relates to the CPS, contact Paul Hayward, Deputy Head of Communications, on 020 77 968041.

Notes to Editors

Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPISI) was established as an independent statutory body by the Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate Act 2000, on 1 October 2000. The Chief Inspector is appointed by, and reports to, the Attorney General.

The Overall Performance Assessment (OPA) report is based on assessments and judgments that have been made by HMCPISI using a combination of absolute and comparative assessments of performance. These came from national data, CPS self-assessment, HMCPISI assessments, and by assessment under the criteria and indicators of good performance set out in the OPA framework. The exercise included visits to all 42 CPS Areas, and the four London sectors over a seven month period between June and December 2005.

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 aspects, 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. 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 CPS Areas, and CPS HQ, will use this information to address issues at local and national level where this is necessary.

CPS London serves the area covered by the Metropolitan Police Service and City of London Police. Like all CPS Areas, it also takes cases from British Transport Police, but the volume of cases from that source is higher than for most Areas. Its main office is based at Ludgate Hill, London. CPS London serves 35 magistrates' courts and 12 Crown Court centres, including the Central Criminal Court, and youth courts. In the year ended March 2005 the Area employed 1,140.4 full time equivalent staff, and handled 233,385 cases, including 39,798 (17%) where advice was given to the police before charge.

This press release and the report in relation to CPS London should be read in conjunction with HMCPISI's national press release and the summative report which provides an overall performance assessment in relation to all 42 CPS Areas and the four London sectors. These are also available on HMCPISI's website in the embargoed sections. Twenty-two of the reports were published in December 2005 to avoid an unacceptably long lapse between assessment and publication. Those relating to the remaining twenty Areas are published today.