

HMCPsi inspection of CPS Surrey

HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPsi) has today published its report on the inspection of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in Surrey (the area).

This was a full inspection following a poor overall performance assessment in September 2007. This inspection found that Surrey had made progress against the majority of weaknesses identified in 2007, in particular strengthening the efficiency of its administrative support, and that case outcomes had improved so that the overall rating of the area's performance is now **FAIR**.

Main findings:

- The area has improved its working relationships with other agencies in the criminal justice system and is now considered a more responsive and constructive organisation.
- The standard of casework is better but needs to be improved further at all stages from initial advice and decision-making, through ongoing review to case preparation and presentation.
- Successful outcomes in magistrates' courts' cases have improved and the conviction rate of 86.6% in 2008-09 is nearly at the national average. Administrative processes in magistrates' courts' cases have improved and the trial effectiveness rate is much improved.
- Successful outcomes in Crown Court cases have improved but remain below national averages and timeliness of case preparation needs to improve, albeit trial effectiveness is good.
- Standards of advocacy in the courts are mixed.
- The most serious and sensitive cases are handled well and in particular there has been positive work in respect of rape cases, leading to improvements in outcomes.
- Handling of the prosecution's duties of disclosure of unused material to the defence remains a weakness.
- Some aspects of victim and witness care have improved significantly but communication with victims requires further work.
- The focus on performance management is better although there is a need to involve all staff.
- The area has significantly improved its management of resources and the level of sickness absence is much better.
- The management of change is now underpinned by sound planning.
- Community engagement has a higher focus than previously and needs to be developed with a broader range of community groups.

Inspectors identified two strengths in performance and one aspect of good practice. The area will need to concentrate on addressing the 11 recommendations and 14 aspects for improvement identified in order to strengthen overall performance and achieve its vision of continued progress and achieving business excellence in all aspects.

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

"I am pleased that CPS Surrey has improved its performance across a range of administrative, management and case work aspects. Nevertheless, staff and managers need to work closely together to achieve fully satisfactory levels of performance so that a fuller assurance can be given to the people of Surrey".

This press release should be read in conjunction with the report itself and the executive summary which is integral to it and also available separately.

Notes for editors

HMCPIS is an independent statutory body established by the Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate Act 2000, which came into force on 1 October 2000. The Chief Inspector is appointed by, and reports to, the Attorney General.

This inspection included detailed scrutiny of finalised case files and some current cases were observed at court. Inspectors considered a wide aspect of casework including decision-making and handling together with the systems, management and structured monitoring of performance which underpin good casework.

The team comprised legal and business management inspectors working closely together with a lay inspector who helped examine the way in which the CPS relates to the public in dealing with witnesses and victims, engagement with the community including minority groups, handling of complaints and the application of the public interest test contained in the Code for Crown Prosecutors.

Surrey is one of 42 CPS areas each of which has a chief crown prosecutor. It deals with criminal cases at Guildford, Reigate, Staines and Woking Magistrates' Courts and at the Crown Court sitting at Guildford and Kingston.