

Press Notice

Embargoed until 00:01 14 March 2006



CPS Staffordshire

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

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.

The overall performance assessment of CPS Staffordshire was **Good**.

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	Fair
Leadership	Good
The service to victims and witnesses	Good
Resource management	Fair
Other Defining Aspects	
Managing magistrates' courts cases	Good
Managing Crown Court cases	Good
Handling sensitive cases and hate crimes	Excellent
Custody time limits	Good
Disclosure	Excellent
Presenting and progressing cases at court	Good
Delivering change	Good
Managing performance to improve	Good
Securing community confidence	Good

The critical aspects are those which 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 Staffordshire, for the most part, makes good quality decisions and progresses casework efficiently. It has a sound approach to handling sensitive cases and hate crime. However, the Area needs to take steps to improve the overall rate of successful casework outcomes and to address, in conjunction with the police, the high level of discontinuance in the magistrates' court.

The senior team are key players in the local criminal justice system, who drive major initiatives and are committed to engaging with the local community. Performance management processes have improved since the last inspection and there is a sound approach to planning. The Area has taken a number of steps which indicate it treats value for money principles as a priority. Although the Area overspent its budget by 1% in 2004-05.

At the time of our assessment, the Area planned to roll out statutory charging in January 2006, although most of the anticipated benefits of the shadow scheme were not being realised. The first witness care unit had been established under the No Witness No Justice scheme, and overall, victims and witnesses are receiving a good level of support from CPS Staffordshire.

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

“It is pleasing to see that CPS Staffordshire has made progress since our last inspection, with a strong performance in relation to the quality of casework generally. The Area’s handling of sensitive of cases and hate crime is excellent. Even so, performance has slipped slightly in terms of casework delivery and the Area should now focus on achieving improved outcomes. In particular, the Area needs to take steps, in conjunction with police, to address the high level of discontinuance in the magistrates’ courts.”

The report is now available to journalists on an embargoed basis by visiting the Inspectorate’s website (www.hmcpai.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 Anna Prosser, Communications Manager, on 01785 272204.

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 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 Staffordshire serves the area covered by the Staffordshire Constabulary. Its main office is based at Stafford. In the year ended March 2005 the Area employed 123.3 full time equivalent staff, and handled 33,037 cases, which included 4,521 (13.7%) where advice was given to the police before charge.

This press release and the report in relation to CPS Staffordshire 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. 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.