

Press Notice

Embargoed until 00:01 Hrs
Tuesday 16 March 2010



HM CPS Inspectorate

CPS London Borough Performance Assessment

London Traffic Unit

Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HM CPSI) has today published their performance assessment of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) London, traffic unit.

This is one of a planned series of borough performance assessments of the units in CPS London. The other assessments relate to borough units. This report has been published today along with ten such borough reports and an overarching report relating to CPS London as a whole.

The overall performance assessment of CPS London, traffic unit was **FAIR**.

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

Aspect	Score	Assessment
Pre-charge advice and decisions	3	Good
Decision-making, preparation and progression in magistrates' court cases	2	Fair
Decision-making, preparation and progression in Crown Court cases ¹	Not scored	
The prosecution of cases at court	2	Fair
Serious and sensitive traffic cases	3	Good
Disclosure	0	Poor
Custody time limits ¹	Not scored	
The service to victims and witnesses	2	Fair
Managing performance to improve	2	Fair
Managing resources ¹	Not scored	
Management and partnership working	3	Good
Overall assessment	17¹	Fair

CPS London traffic unit provides a London-wide service prosecuting motoring offence cases from all Metropolitan Police boroughs.

Decision-making was for the most part sound, but there is room for improvement in this and in the selection of the appropriate offence. Case

¹ The scoring matrix for the London traffic unit has been adjusted so as to take account of the two additional aspects that were not scored.

preparation was fair in the majority of cases, but timeliness needed to improve. In magistrates' court cases the successful outcome (conviction) rate in the year to June 2009 was 91.3% which was substantially better than the CPS London average of 85.9% and the national average of 87.3% for the full range of magistrates' court cases.

The discontinuance rate and overall attrition rate in relation to those cases prosecuted are low.

The LTU advises soundly upon, but does not prepare or present, the most serious traffic cases in the Crown Court.

The standard of advocacy by crown prosecutors and associate prosecutors (non-legally qualified staff trained to present cases and, under extended powers, to prosecute non imprisonable offences at trial) was commensurate to the nature of the work undertaken.

Compliance with the prosecution's duties of disclosure of unused material to the defence was poor.

The unit's service to victims and witnesses was mixed, with good communication if charges were dropped or significantly altered, but with a need to identify when additional witness support is required at court.

The role of the unit was developing, with additional cases being taken on, and more serious ones likely to be undertaken in the future. Planning processes for those changes appeared sound.

Stephen Wooler, HM Chief Inspector of the Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate, said:

“The London traffic unit is expanding its role and the planning for this is sound. With some greater attention paid to the quality of decision-making and case preparation the unit will be well placed to provide a good standard of service across London in relation to the full range of motoring offences.”

This press release should be read in conjunction with the executive summary which is attached.

The full report is now available from the embargoed section of the inspectorate's website (www.hmcp.si.gov.uk) using the following details:

Username: MEDIA99

Password: LBPA2Mar10

For further information please contact Anisha Visram, HMCP SI's media contact, on 020 7210 1187/07901 856 348.

Notes to editors

1. HMCPSTI 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.
2. The pilot performance assessment of Croydon borough, published in May 2009, was the first of a planned series of performance assessments of the individual borough units in CPS London.
3. There are 33 geographical units based on London boroughs and the cities of London and Westminster. CPS London also has a dedicated traffic unit and a complex casework centre which handles serious and complex cases and those at the Central Criminal Court (Old Bailey). CPS London provides advice to police and charging decisions through a telephone service, CPS London Direct, or where a face-to-face meeting is needed through the local borough units. The units are gathered into six districts based on Crown Court centres. The traffic unit falls within the Woolwich district because of its physical location.
4. The CPS London traffic unit advises police on the full range of motoring offences, including cases involving fatalities. The unit prosecutes cases in a number of "Gateway" magistrates' courts across London, but cases in the Crown Court including causing death by dangerous driving, are handled by the borough units.
5. The borough performance assessment (BPA) process provides a benchmark for the performance of CPS London boroughs in ten key aspects of work. Each of the aspects is assessed as being Excellent, Good, Fair or Poor. The borough is then assessed on its overall performance in the light of these markings. The limited nature of the casework dealt with by the traffic unit meant that the framework had to be adapted, and the unit was not assessed in relation to Crown Court work and custody time limits. The BPA also evaluates the management of resources at unit level, but does not score this.
6. The scoring mechanism is described in annex C of the report. This provides some limiters that apply in addition to the total of points scored. This is because of the significant impact that some aspects will have on the delivery of the borough's core business, or because of the impact of a number of Poor aspects. The scoring matrix was adjusted for the traffic unit to take account of the additional aspects not scored.
7. The performance assessment included examination of finalised case files; interviews with representatives of partner criminal justice agencies and the judiciary; discussions with borough staff; observations at the office; and observations at the magistrates' court.

8. The findings from the borough performance assessments undertaken have been drawn together in a pan-CPS London report which addresses the significant issues that have emerged as the assessments have progressed in order to provide an overall picture of the performance of the area. The report has also been published today along with ten other borough reports and this report relating to the traffic unit.