

Press Notice

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CPS West Midlands

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

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

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 West Midland generally handles cases satisfactorily and the Effective Trial Management Programme has also been implemented for cases in all courts. The pre-charge advice scheme has been established on a statutory basis since November 2004 and although the benefits of the scheme were not realised in 2004-05, improved performance was seen by September 2005. Witness care units have been established across the Area. These major criminal justice initiatives have, in the main, been successfully planned and delivered with good co-operation between the Area and local criminal justice system partners.

Overall however, the rate of unsuccessful outcomes was worse than the national average. The number of cases for committal to the Crown Court that are discharged because they are not ready continues to be a significant issue affecting performance and still needs to be tackled successfully. Similarly, the Area's handling of the disclosure of unused material, particularly in Crown Court cases was weak.

The Area has worked hard to secure the confidence of the diverse communities in the West Midlands and this is an area in which it excels. Public confidence in the effectiveness of criminal justice agencies in bringing offenders to justice, as measured by the British Crime Survey, has shown significant improvement.

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

“CPS West Midlands is one of the largest CPS Areas in the country and deals with a high proportion of serious cases. Considerable improvements have been achieved in a number of respects during the period of our assessment, including the implementation of national initiatives in difficult circumstances and the building of confidence of the community. The Area needs to concentrate on improving its outcomes and in particular reducing the number of committals that are discharged because cases are not ready.”

The report is now available to journalists on an embargoed basis by visiting the Inspectorate's website (www.hmcpsi.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 Vinny Bolina, Area Communications Manager, on 0121 262 1531.

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 West Midlands serves the area covered by the West Midlands Police. Its main office is based in central Birmingham. In the year ended March 2005 the Area employed 471.8 full time equivalent staff, and handled 102,651 cases, which included 21,692 (21.1%) where advice was given to the police before charge.

This press release and the report in relation to CPS West Midlands 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.