

Press Notice

Embargoed until 00:01 14 March 2006



CPS Wiltshire

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

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 Wiltshire 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
Managing resources	Good
Other Defining Aspects	
Managing magistrates' courts cases	Fair
Managing Crown Court cases	Good
Handling sensitive cases and hate crimes	Good
Custody time limits	Fair
Disclosure	Good
Presenting and progressing cases at court	Fair
Delivering change	Good
Managing performance to improve	Fair
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.

Overall, the quality of casework decision-making in CPS Wiltshire is good and compliance with the prosecution's duty in respect of the disclosure of unused material is significantly better than the national average. The handling of hate crimes and other sensitive cases is also good.

There has been a reduction in the level of ineffective trials (i.e. cases fixed for a contested hearing which do not proceed and are postponed). This has also contributed to the Area's achievement, in conjunction with its criminal justice service partners, of most of the Government's targets for the criminal justice system. The timeliness targets for processing cases involving persistent young offenders (71 days from arrest to sentence) were met in 2004-05, but the number of offences brought to justice needed to be improved.

The Area has a sound approach to resource management and clear steps have been taken to achieve value for money. The senior management team has established a clear vision, values and direction for the Area and a good level of corporacy is developing, with a proactive approach to planning and delivering change. The Area is able to demonstrate good commitment to community engagement and improving public confidence, as part of its core business.

There was a need to strengthen some aspects of the Area's performance to ensure the robustness of its custody time limit system. In addition some operational aspects of the Direct Communication with Victims scheme need to be strengthened. Some information derived from the casework quality assurance scheme could be used more effectively to improve performance.

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

“This is an encouraging assessment for those who are served by CPS Wiltshire. The overall quality of casework is good and the Area has a sound approach to resource management. I am confident that the Area will continue to develop strongly, building on this assessment to raise performance in respect of those aspects which are less strong to match those already assessed as good.”

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 Kim O'Neill on 01249 76613.

Notes to Editors

Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPsi) 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 HMCPsi using a combination of absolute and comparative assessments of performance. These came from national data, CPS self-assessment, HMCPsi 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 Wiltshire serves the area covered by the Wiltshire Constabulary. Its main office is based at Chippenham. In the year ended March 2005 the Area employed 51 full time equivalent staff, and handled 14,859 cases, which included 2,103 (14.2%) where advice was given to the police before charge.

This press release and the report in relation to CPS Wiltshire should be read in conjunction with HMCPsi'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 HMCPsi'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.