

HM CPS INSPECTORATE OVERALL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF CPS DERBYSHIRE

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

The OPA process provides a benchmark for each CPS Area's performance in thirteen key aspects of work. 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 Derbyshire was GOOD.

The table below provides a breakdown of the assessed level of performance against the thirteen aspects and provides a comparison with the 2005 exercise:

OVERALL ASSESSMENT		GOOD		
Critical aspects	Assessment level			Direction of travel
	OPA 2005	OPA 2007		
Pre-charge decision-making	Fair	Good		Improved
Ensuring successful outcomes in the magistrates' courts	Fair	Fair		Improved¹
Ensuring successful outcomes in the Crown Court	Fair	Good		Improved
The service to victims and witnesses	Fair	Fair		Stable
Leadership	Good	Good		Stable
Overall critical assessment level		Good		
Progressing cases at court	Fair	Fair		Improved¹
Sensitive cases and hate crime	Good	Fair		Declined
Disclosure	Fair	Good		Improved
Custody time limits	Fair	Fair		Stable
Delivering change	Good	Good		Stable
Managing resources	Fair	Fair		Stable
Managing performance to improve	Good	Fair		Declined
Securing community confidence	Good	Fair		Declined
OVERALL ASSESSMENT	Fair	GOOD		

Some aspects have been categorised as critical; this is due to the significant impact that these aspects have on the overall performance of a CPS Area and the service it delivers to the public.

CPS Derbyshire has improved its overall assessment to Good compared with Fair in 2005. In this assessment five aspects of performance were found to have improved with five remaining stable and three having fallen back.

Inspectors also identified improvements since the Area Effectiveness Inspection carried out in early 2007.

¹ Performance in relation to these two aspects has improved since the 2005 OPA albeit not to an extent which would warrant an improved rating.

Key findings include:

In 2006-07 the proportions of cases ending in conviction were better than national performance in both the magistrates' courts (85.3% compared with 84.3%) and the Crown Court (83.5% compared with 72.2%). The proportion of sensitive and hate crime cases ending in conviction has also increased (although it remains behind the national average).

The main underlying improvement is in statutory charging (under which the CPS has assumed responsibility for the initial decision whether to charge in all serious and contested cases: previously a matter for the police). In 2006-07, the Area significantly reduced the proportion of cases which had to be discontinued after an initial decision to prosecute and achieved its targets against the other five targets measuring the benefits realisation of the scheme.

There is also a willingness to adopt new ideas and systems (such as the witness intermediary scheme) in order to improve performance generally.

The quality of Crown Court case preparation has improved significantly, although more could be done to deal with foreseeable problems which sometimes lead to cases being dropped at a late stage.

The quality of case preparation in the magistrates' courts has also improved, but it is less reliable than in the Crown Court, and there are still timeliness issues to resolve.

Whilst the Area has worked to reduce the high number of cases discharged at committal (because the prosecution is not ready to commit them to the Crown Court and the court refuses an adjournment, or no application is made in anticipation of refusal), the recent improvement is to some extent off-set by an equivalent increase in the number of Crown Court cases which are dropped by the prosecution after committal.

The quality of the handling of sensitive casework such as racially aggravated crime and rape is improving, but not fast enough to remain in line with increased national expectations. The Area demonstrates a clear commitment to improving witness care in both sensitive and volume crime cases, but it recognises that there is further room for improvement.

The Area is well managed, and corporacy is demonstrated internally and externally. The Area is working to promote community confidence in the criminal justice system, which was higher than national according to the British Crime Survey

Stephen Wooler CB, HM Chief Inspector of HMCPSI, said:

"The managers and staff of CPS Derbyshire have worked hard since 2005 to improve the quality of casework and business systems, both internally and jointly with criminal justice partners. This is clearly reflected in the Area's improved overall rating. There has been a significant improvement in the quality of pre-charge advice given to police officers, which has helped deliver one of the best overall conviction rates in England and Wales. Further work is needed to ensure that progress continues, especially in relation to the timely preparation of magistrates' courts cases."

The inspectorate has visited all 42 CPS Areas over a six month period in order to provide a benchmark from which future work can be informed. This summative report sets out on a comparative basis the assessments for all 42 Areas. It uses the outcomes of these assessments to determine where best the

CPS should 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.

This press release should be read in conjunction with the report itself (which contains an integral summary).

Notes to Editors

Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPPI) 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 judgements that have been made by HMCPPI using a combination of absolute and comparative assessments of performance. These came from national data, CPS self-assessment, HMCPPI 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 2007. Each Area is rated excellent, good, fair or poor.

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 Derbyshire serves the area covered by the Derbyshire Constabulary. It has two offices, at Derby and Chesterfield. The Area Headquarters (Secretariat) is based at the Derby office. In the year ended March 2007 the Area employed 102.5 full time equivalent staff, and handled 15,703 cases before the magistrates' courts and 2,211 in the Crown Court. It also gave advice to the police in 5,474 cases which did not result in proceedings

This news release and the report in relation to CPS Gwent are part of a block of 13 individual Area reports published today together with a summative report drawing together the common themes and presenting the assessment for all 42 Areas on a comparative basis.