

## HM CPS INSPECTORATE OVERALL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF CPS GWENT

**HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HM CPSI) has today published their Overall Performance Assessment (OPA) of CPS Gwent.**

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 Gwent was FAIR.**

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		FAIR		
Critical aspects	Assessment level			Direction of travel
	OPA 2005	OPA 2007		
Pre-charge decision-making	Fair	<b>Fair</b>		<b>Stable</b>
Ensuring successful outcomes in the magistrates' courts	Fair	<b>Fair</b>		<b>Declined<sup>1</sup></b>
Ensuring successful outcomes in the Crown Court	Good	<b>Good</b>		<b>Stable</b>
The service to victims and witnesses	Good	<b>Fair</b>		<b>Declined</b>
Leadership	Fair	<b>Fair</b>		<b>Stable</b>
<b>Overall critical assessment level</b>				<b>FAIR</b>
Progressing cases at court	Fair	<b>Fair</b>		<b>Stable</b>
Sensitive cases and hate crime	Good	<b>Good</b>		<b>Stable</b>
Disclosure	Poor	<b>Fair</b>		<b>Improved</b>
Custody time limits	Good	<b>Poor</b>		<b>Declined</b>
Delivering change	Fair	<b>Fair</b>		<b>Stable</b>
Managing resources	Good	<b>Fair</b>		<b>Declined</b>
Managing performance to improve	Fair	<b>Fair</b>		<b>Improved<sup>2</sup></b>
Securing community confidence	Good	<b>Good</b>		<b>Improved<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>OVERALL ASSESSMENT</b>	Fair			<b>FAIR</b>

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.

### Overall assessment

The overall assessment for CPS Gwent (Fair) remains unchanged since 2005. Performance has improved in two aspects; stayed relatively stable in eight, and declined in two. The Area has the capacity to improve further provided it develops a clearer sense of direction than has hitherto been

1 Although the assessment for this aspect remains unchanged there has been significant decline within the range of performance covered by the band.

2 Although the assessment for this aspect remains unchanged there has been a significant improvement within the range of performance covered by the band.

possible. It also needs improved and open-minded collaboration with criminal justice partners, and the establishment of a settled management team.

**Specific findings:**

The Area was without a permanent Chief Crown Prosecutor (CCP) from 2004 until August 2007, and has been without a full time substantive Area Business Manager (ABM) since September 2006. This situation led to a lack of direction and leadership, and has prevented some necessary change being progressed or implemented fully. It has also hindered the development of a strategic approach with criminal justice partners to address some areas of performance and operational weaknesses. A new CCP was appointed in August 2007. The OPA report reflects performance during 2006-07 but also takes account of changes in the earlier part of 2007-08.

The Area is now better placed to determine a longer term strategy and how it is to be achieved. Changes to the internal structure have occurred and the first phase of an accommodation move has taken place.

There is a need to improve the arrangements for the provision of pre-charge decision-making<sup>3</sup>, particularly the proportion which is given face-to-face with the police.

The proportion of cases that have been subject to a pre-charge decision and that are later discontinued remains high.

In both the magistrates' courts and Crown Court, conviction rates were above the national average for 2006-07. Arrangements have recently been put in place to improve the way cases progress through the system in the magistrates' courts, and the Area has forged productive relationships with the Crown Court. The Area needs to ensure that cases involving a custody time limit are handled properly.

There is some good work being done to identify witness and victim needs at the point of charge and thereafter, and to ensure that they are kept updated with the progress of cases. However, the Area is not complying in a consistent manner with the full range of obligations designed to improve the service to victims and witnesses.

The Area has embarked on a programme of improvement to increase both the scope of performance information and promote a performance culture and hopes that the new arrangements and structural changes will help to make the Area more cohesive. It would help the Area to have a settled management team as soon as possible.

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

*"The Area has restructured and is developing a new management team after a long period without a permanent Chief Crown Prosecutor or Area Business Manager. While the achievements for 2006-07 have been mixed I hope that the Area's new structure and performance framework will provide a sound platform for improvement."*

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

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3 Following implementation of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 the CPS has assumed responsibility for the initial decision whether to charge more serious and contested cases.

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.

### **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 Gwent serves the area covered by the Gwent Constabulary. Its office is based at Newport. In the year ended March 2007 the Area employed 80.6 full time equivalent staff, and handled 13,304 cases before the magistrates' courts and 1,387 in the Crown Court. It also gave advice to the police in 3,304 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.