

Press Notice

Embargoed until 00:01 14 March 2006



CPS Merseyside

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

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 Merseyside 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	Fair
Managing resources	Fair
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	Good
Delivering change	Good
Managing performance to improve	Fair
Securing community confidence	Fair

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.

The quality of casework handling in Merseyside is generally sound with a number of aspects such as the handling of sensitive cases, compliance with the prosecution's duty of disclosure and Crown Court work generally, rated as good.

The Area was about to complete a major staff and management re-structure at the time of the assessment. This, coupled with the opening of an Area-wide witness care unit could have a significant impact on the future success of the Area.

The Area is working proactively with criminal justice partners on the implementation of national initiatives using dedicated resources for change management. Good progress is being made although the realisation of benefits related to some of the changes had not been achieved fully at the time of the assessment.

Performance against CPS and national multi-agency public service agreement targets was variable; some were very good, while others needed improvement. Trends are generally positive and recent reinvigoration of the performance management regime should help drive further improvements. Management systems continue to develop and, allied to the strong leadership, should enable stronger performance results in the future.

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

“This is an encouraging report with a number of positive aspects, both in terms of the quality of casework and management. Significant effort has gone into implementing new initiatives and the challenge for the Area now is to translate new systems into stronger results. In this regard, recent results have been positive.”

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 Kate O’Brien, Area Communications Manager, on 0151 239 6465.

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 Merseyside serves the area covered by the Merseyside Police. Its main office is based at Liverpool. In the year ended March 2005 the Area employed 251.6 full time equivalent staff, and handled 54,503 cases, which included 11,414 (20.9%) where advice was given to the police before charge.

This press release and the report in relation to CPS Merseyside 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.