

## **CPS INSPECTORATE OVERALL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF CPS NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**

### **HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPsi) has today published its Overall Performance Assessment (OPA) of CPS Northamptonshire.**

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 Northamptonshire 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:

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

The overall assessment (Fair) in relation to CPS Northamptonshire is unchanged from the 2005 assessment. However the direction of travel is a very positive one with improved ratings in five aspects of performance and further improvement in two (albeit not sufficient to increase the rating). Four aspects have remained stable whilst two declined.

<sup>1</sup> Although the assessment for this aspect remains unchanged, there has been significant improvement within the range of performance covered by the band.

**Main findings include:**

The overall conviction rate in relation to magistrates' courts cases has improved and continues to do so. During 2006-07 it was significantly below the national average (82.0% compared to 84.3%) but recent months have seen it exceed that average.

Crown Court casework has improved with the overall conviction rate substantially better than the national average (85.8% compared with 77.7%). There is also a trend of improvement.

The Area has worked more closely with the police to improve the arrangements for statutory charging (under which the CPS has assumed responsibility from the police for the initial decision of whether to charge in more serious and contested cases). The Area is now consistently realising five out of the six expected benefits of the scheme.

The Area has effective trial rates (the proportion of contested cases which actually proceed to trial on the day fixed) which are significantly better than the national averages in both the magistrates' courts and the Crown Court.

Compliance with the prosecution's obligation in relation to disclosure of unused material is good.

The procedures for monitoring cases involving custody time limits need to be tightened.

There have been improvements in the service provided to victims and witnesses but the Area needs to be able to satisfy itself that the minimum requirements of witness care under the national No Witness No Justice initiative are being met.

The results of the 2006 staff survey and a more recent Investors in People review both confirm high level of staff satisfaction.

The Area's engagement with the community has focused on victims and witnesses. It is now working with the police to identify and prioritise those parts of the county where community safety is a particular issue and focus on the relevant communities.

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

*"I am pleased that the overall trend of improvement found at the time of our own Area Effectiveness Inspection in December 2006 has continued. The staff and managers in CPS Northamptonshire are to be congratulated on the progress they have made in improving performance leading to better casework outcomes. It has also been more proactive and developed a higher profile within the local community for local criminal justice system. "*

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 Northamptonshire serves the area covered by the Northamptonshire Police. It has one office based in Northampton. In the year ended March 2007 the Area employed 66.9 full time equivalent staff, and handled 11,668 cases before the magistrates' courts and 1,108 in the Crown Court. It also gave advice to the police in 3,108 cases which did not result in proceedings

This news release and the report in relation to CPS Northamptonshire are part of a block of 13 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.