

Press Notice

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CPS Northamptonshire

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

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 Northamptonshire 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	Fair
Ensuring successful outcomes	Fair
Leadership	Poor
The service to victims and witnesses	Fair
Managing resources	Fair
Other Defining Aspects	
Managing magistrates' courts cases	Fair
Managing Crown Court cases	Fair
Handling sensitive cases and hate crimes	Fair
Custody time limits	Good
Disclosure	Fair
Presenting and progressing cases at court	Good
Delivering change	Fair
Managing performance to improve	Good
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.

Overall, the quality of casework handling is satisfactory in Northamptonshire but some aspects of work, including case progression and the prosecution's duty of disclosure in relation to unused material, require further development. There had been some difficulties in the Area in respect of leadership and governance. Whilst these problems are being addressed, dealing with these issues may have hindered progress on other aspects of performance in 2004-05.

Performance in respect of multi-agency public service agreement targets is variable and improvements are necessary for most categories. The rate of ineffective trials (i.e. cases listed for a contested hearing which do not proceed on the date fixed) are good (i.e. low), particularly in the Crown Court.

Some progress has been made in implementing national initiatives, although more needs to be done to ensure that the benefits of the changes are realised fully. Relationships with other criminal justice agencies are satisfactory, but need to be more effective in delivering improved results.

The Area has developed an improved performance management system that is now identifying aspects of work that need improvement.

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

“CPS Northamptonshire has gone through a difficult period of substantial change. They have maintained satisfactory standards of casework during this transition, but have not developed as much as desirable. They now need to build on the foundations that have been established and translate this into improved levels of performance in the future.”

The report is now available to journalists on an embargoed basis by visiting the Inspectorate’s website (www.hmcp.si.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 HMCP SI Communications Section, on 020 7210 1143. If the query relates to the CPS, contact Fiona Campbell, Area Business Manager, on 01604 823685.

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 Northamptonshire serves the area covered by the Northamptonshire Police. Its main office is based at Northampton. In the year ended March 2005 the Area employed 65.2 full time equivalent staff, and handled 19,804 cases, which included 5,412 (27.3%) where advice was given to the police before charge.

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