

Press Release

Embargoed until 00:01 Hrs
Monday 8 October 2007



HM CPSI overall performance assessment of CPS Nottinghamshire

HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HM CPSI) has today published the overall performance assessment (OPA) of CPS Nottinghamshire (the Area).

The OPA process provides a benchmark for each CPS Area's performance in 13 key aspects of work, each of which 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 Nottinghamshire was FAIR.

The table below provides a breakdown of the assessed level of performance against the 13 aspects and provides a comparison with the 2005 exercise:

| CRITICAL ASPECTS | Assessment Level | | |
|---|------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| | OPA 2005 | OPA 2007 | Direction of Travel |
| Pre-charge decision-making | Good | Fair | Declined |
| Ensuring successful outcomes in the magistrates' courts | Fair | Poor | Declined |
| Ensuring successful outcomes in the Crown Court | Good | Good | Stable |
| The service to victims and witnesses | Fair | Fair | Stable |
| Leadership | Good | Good | Stable |
| Overall Critical Assessment Level | | FAIR | |
| Progressing cases at court | Good | Fair | Declined |
| Sensitive cases and hate crime | Good | Good | Improved ¹ |
| Disclosure | Poor | Fair | Improved |
| Custody time limits | Fair | Excellent | Improved |
| Delivering change | Good | Fair | Declined |
| Managing resources | Fair | Good | Improved |
| Managing performance to improve | Fair | Fair | Stable |
| Securing community confidence | Good | Good | Stable |
| OVERALL ASSESSMENT | FAIR | FAIR | |

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

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

2006-07 was a transitional year for CPS Nottinghamshire. Some significant changes to their structures and the management team took place and this impacted on delivery in the short term. Between the 2005 OPA and this assessment the Area has concentrated efforts to build a foundation from which they can improve, but in doing so, they have 'taken their eye off the ball' for some important existing initiatives. This has contributed to the mixed results of this assessment whereby four aspects show improvement, but another four show a decline against the last OPA. The Area has the capacity to improve its rating if it can: build on improvements implemented in the latter months of 2006-07; spread good practice from serious casework to volume crime; translate effort and plans into better results; and improve joint working on charging.

Outcomes in respect of casework are mixed but tend to be in the lower quartile of CPS national performance for magistrates' courts cases, sensitive cases and pre-charge decisions. There is a strong focus on serious casework and this has led to some good results in those cases. Performance with regard to the handling of cases involving persistent young offenders has also been very good.

There were signs of progress and actions towards the end of the year that auger well for the future for some aspects of work, for example compliance with the prosecution's obligation of disclosure in relation to unused material. The Area has made concerted efforts to improve management of custody time limits, resulting in an 'Excellent' rating. The formation of a Public Protection team dealing with designated serious cases is a positive step that should improve outcomes in the future. Nottinghamshire has done well to bring spending in line with a budget which has reduced to reflect reductions in caseload. It has also been able to make good progress in terms of the proportion of their time that in-house prosecutors, designated caseworkers and Higher Court Advocates spend in court.

There is a need to improve the provision and quality of pre-charge decisions. In some instances this will be dependent on better quality work by the police. Prosecutors are struggling with case progression, which is contributing towards the high level of ineffective trials in the magistrates' courts. Whilst the service provided to victims and witnesses shows some signs of improvement, further work is required to deliver a consistently good service.

Stephen Wooler CB, HM Chief Inspector, said:

"This has been a challenging time for CPS Nottinghamshire that has resulted in a somewhat mixed assessment. The more recent plans and activities have the potential, if implemented and embedded effectively, to produce more positive results in the future."

The Inspectorate is visiting all 42 CPS Areas over a six month period in order to provide a benchmark from which future work can be informed. A summative report will be published in early 2008 which will set out on a comparative basis the assessments for all the Areas. The outcomes of these assessments will be used to determine where best to focus Inspectorate resources in order to promote improvement within the CPS and the criminal justice system as a whole. It is also hoped that the Areas, and CPS Headquarters, 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).

For further information, please contact Andreas Harding, HMCPSI Communications Manager, on 020 7210 1143 or 07901 856 346.

Notes to Editors

- 1 HMCPSI was established as an independent statutory body on 1 October 2000 by the Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate Act 2000. The Chief Inspector is appointed by, and reports to, the Attorney General.
- 2 The OPA report is based on judgements 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 findings and by measurement under the criteria and indicators of good performance set out in the OPA framework. The exercise will include visits to all 42 CPS Areas over a six month period, between June-December 2007. Each Area is rated 'Excellent', 'Good', 'Fair' or 'Poor'.
- 3 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 ones, in order to arrive at the OPA. This assessment model is included in the framework and is available to all Areas.
- 4 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.
- 5 CPS Nottinghamshire serves the area covered by the Nottinghamshire Police. Its main office is based at Nottingham. In the year ended March 2007 it employed 154.8 full-time equivalent staff, and handled 20,985 cases before the magistrates' courts and 2,564 in the Crown Court. Advice was also given to the police in 6,204 cases which did not result in proceedings.
- 6 This Press Release and the Report in relation to CPS Nottinghamshire are part of a block of 12 reports published today. HMCPSI will publish three further tranches of reports covering the remaining 30 Areas.