

## HMCPsi overall performance assessment of CPS Surrey

HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPsi) has today published the overall performance assessment (OPA) of CPS Surrey (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 Surrey was Poor.

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

<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	Poor	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Improved</b>
Ensuring successful outcomes in the magistrates' courts	Fair	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Declined</b>
Ensuring successful outcomes in the Crown Court	Good	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Declined</b>
The service to victims and witnesses	Fair	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Stable</b>
Leadership	Fair	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Declined</b>
<b>Overall critical assessment level</b>		<b>POOR</b>	
Progressing cases at court	Fair	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Declined</b>
Sensitive cases and hate crime	Fair	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Declined</b>
Disclosure	Fair	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Declined</b>
Custody time limits	Fair	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Declined</b>
Delivering change	Fair	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Stable</b>
Managing resources	Poor	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Stable</b>
Managing performance to improve	Fair	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Stable</b>
Securing community confidence	Fair	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Stable</b>
<b>OVERALL ASSESSMENT</b>	Fair	<b>POOR</b>	

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.

CPS Surrey did not perform well for much of 2006-07, following a poorly planned restructure in the early part of the year. The subsequent administrative systems were inadequate and had a significant knock-on impact on many aspects of work including case progression, casework outcomes and the budget. The restructure and subsequent difficulties led to tensions with the criminal justice agencies in Surrey. Managers were unable to identify timely, effective solutions to the difficulties they encountered. The management of custody time limits, the handling of sensitive cases, and compliance with the prosecution's duty of disclosure were all particularly weak and in need of improvement.

There was some improvement in the provision of pre-charge decisions (the CPS has taken over from the police responsibility for the decision to charge in the more serious or contested cases) in 2006-07. However, there was a need to increase the advice given to police officers in face-to-face consultations. CPS Surrey had the highest level of jury acquittals in the country and more needs to be done to understand the reasons for this. Other than that, Crown Court outcomes were generally better than found nationally.

The Area was clearly committed to providing high levels of victim and witness care. Some improvements were made in 2006-07 despite the undoubted difficulties faced by the Witness Care Unit, caused by the ineffectiveness of CPS administrative systems. If the improvements seen in early 2007-08 in clearing administrative backlogs can be maintained, witness care should also benefit.

Despite these difficulties the Surrey criminal justice area performed satisfactorily against its Public Service Agreement targets, which are set by the Government and shared by all criminal justice agencies.

Changes to the management team have taken place and a recovery programme was launched in February 2007 with some assistance from CPS Headquarters. By the time of this assessment it was clear that plans were in place to bring about improvements in many aspects of work, and in some progress was already being made. Of particular importance was the progress made in reducing administrative backlogs which, if sustained, should be a catalyst for more widespread improvements. There was, however, still much to do and this will require the ongoing commitment of the management team and staff if the Area is to reap the benefits of its efforts since February.

Stephen Wooler CB, HM Chief Inspector, said:

*"2006-07 was undoubtedly a challenging year for CPS Surrey. This is by any standard a critical report but the Area has responded positively. The plans put in place since February give grounds for optimism, although clearly there is still much to do before the citizens of Surrey receive the quality of service they are entitled to expect."*

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.

The report is now available to journalists from the embargoed press copies page on the Inspectorate's website ([www.hmcpai.gov.uk/press/press.shtml](http://www.hmcpai.gov.uk/press/press.shtml)) and can be accessed using these details:

USERNAME: MEDIA  
PASSWORD: pic5#Lon

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

### **Notes to Editors**

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.

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'.

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.

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.

CPS Surrey serves the area covered by the Surrey Police. Its main office is based at Guildford. In the year ended March 2007 the Area employed 66.4 full-time equivalent staff and handled 8,290 cases before the magistrates' courts and 1,169 in the Crown Court. Advice was also given to the police in 1,179 cases which did not result in proceedings.

This Press Release and the Report in relation to CPS Surrey are part of a block of nine reports published today. HMCPSI has already published two tranches relating to 22 Areas, and will publish one further tranche of reports covering the remaining Areas.