

Press Notice

Embargoed until 00:01 14 March 2006



CPS London South Sector

HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HM CPSi) has today published its Overall Performance Assessment (OPA) of CPS London South Sector.

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. Due to its size and caseload, CPS London is divided into four sectors. The procedure adopted has therefore been to apply the OPA framework (subject to necessary adjustment) to each of the London sectors. The Area itself is then assessed on its overall performance in the light of these markings.

The overall performance assessment of CPS London South Sector 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	Poor
Leadership	Good
The service to victims and witnesses	Fair
Resource management	Good
Other Defining Aspects	
Managing magistrates' courts cases	Poor
Managing Crown Court cases	Fair
Handling sensitive cases and hate crimes	Fair
Custody time limits	Poor
Disclosure	Fair
Presenting and progressing cases at court	Fair
Delivering change	Fair
Managing performance to improve	Fair
Securing community confidence	Good

The critical aspects are those that have a particularly significant impact on the overall performance of the CPS. They are weighted differently from the other aspects in determining the overall performance of an Area, or in the case of London, the individual sectors.

CPS London South Sector has implemented systems to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of case management and case progression; these have delivered some improvements in performance and most of the trends continue to be positive. However, there remains some way to go especially in relation to the handling of magistrates' court cases, and in particular to reduce the numbers of cases for committal to the Crown Court that are instead discharged because the prosecution are not ready. Case outcomes were generally less satisfactory than the national averages including the high level of unsuccessful outcomes. However, the rate of case discontinuance in the magistrates' courts was pleasingly low.

The Sector's performance, shared with criminal justice partners, in handling persistent young offenders from arrest to sentence was 3 days outside the Government's target of 71 days.

The handling of cases subject to custody time limits was weak in the past, but improvement has continued strongly into the first 3 quarters of 2005 – 06.

There is a corporate approach to managing sector business and the senior team are pro-actively involved in cross agency initiatives. The Sector seeks to achieve value for money and the budget is well controlled. A performance management regime has been established although this needs further development. Sector managers are committed to engaging with the community and the Sector is able to show some service improvements as a result of activity undertaken.

The Sector moved to statutory charging in November 2004 and this has produced some positive results, although not all of the expected benefits have materialised. Witness care units had been implemented throughout the Sector, although they were only resourced by police staff and it was too early to identify whether the expected benefits are being fully achieved.

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

“It is encouraging to see that since its inception in 2003 CPS London South Sector has worked to establish sound foundations to build upon. This should enable the Sector to realise its potential in terms of improved performance across the business and in particular drive improvements in case outcomes and casework management.”

The report is now available to journalists on an embargoed basis by visiting the Inspectorate's website (www.hmcpso.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 HMCPST Communications Section, on 020 7210 1143. If the query relates to the CPS, contact Paul Hayward, Media and Communications, 020 7796 8041.

Notes to Editors

Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPST) 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 HMCPST using a combination of absolute and comparative assessments of performance. These came from national data, CPS self-assessment, HMCPST 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, as well as the four London Sectors, 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 London South Sector serves the area covered by the boroughs of Westminster, Lambeth, Southwark, Croydon, Bromley, Greenwich, Lewisham and Bexley, all of which are covered by the Metropolitan Police Service. It also includes the Inner London Youth Prosecution Service which covers the 12 inner London boroughs, and the Traffic Prosecution Service unit which is a pan-London unit covering all traffic work from the five Metropolitan Police traffic garages across London. Its main office is based at Bermondsey, London. In the year ended March 2005 the Sector employed 389.4 full time equivalent staff, and handled 85,167 cases, which included 15,286 (17.9%) where advice was given to the police before charge.

This press release and the report in relation to CPS London South Sector should be read in conjunction with HMCPPI's report in relation to CPS London as a whole, and the national press release and the summative report which provides an overall performance assessment in relation to all 42 CPS Areas and CPS London. These are also available on HMCPPI'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.