

Press Notice

Embargoed until 00:01 14 March 2006



CPS Suffolk

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

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 Suffolk was **Excellent**.

The table below provides a breakdown of the assessed level of performance against the fourteen aspects:

Critical Aspects	Assessment
Pre-charge decision-making	Good
Ensuring successful outcomes	Excellent
Leadership	Good
The service to victims and witnesses	Good
Managing resources	Good
Other Defining Aspects	
Managing magistrates' courts cases	Good
Managing Crown Court cases	Good
Handling sensitive cases and hate crimes	Good
Custody time limits	Good
Disclosure	Good
Presenting and progressing cases at court	Good
Delivering change	Good
Managing performance to improve	Good
Securing community confidence	Excellent

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.

Statutory charging has been successfully implemented and, although realisation of the benefits has been mixed, the overall picture is positive. Cases continue to be well reviewed, prepared and presented by experienced prosecutors. Newly implemented systems ensure they progress quickly through the courts and are prosecuted by advocates of appropriate experience and expertise. With only a few exceptions, disclosure of unused material is handled well.

Systems are in place to provide appropriate care to witnesses and the victims of crime. Witness care units have recently been introduced in Suffolk and it will take a little time for the full effect to show through.

There is a sound risk based approach towards management in the Area which has been a significant factor in the successful implementation of recent initiatives. Performance is analysed in conjunction with criminal justice service partners and information is used to drive improvement. There is a systematic approach to resource management, particularly in the effective deployment of in-house advocates. The Area has an impressive programme of community activity and played a prominent role in driving improvements to the local criminal justice system.

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

“CPS Suffolk has long enjoyed a good reputation which is recognised in this assessment. The quality of casework review and preparation continues to be sound and is reflected in excellent casework outcomes and the low cracked and ineffective trial rates. Senior managers have demonstrated a positive and corporate approach to management of the Area and working with their partners to improve the local criminal justice system. They have successfully built on our previous report and addressed the matters found in need of attention”

The report is now available to journalists on an embargoed basis by visiting the Inspectorate’s website (www.hmcpsi.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 HMCPSI Communications Section, on 020 7210 1143. If the query relates to the CPS, contact Emily Fenton, Communications Officer, on 01473 282167.

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 judgments 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 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 Suffolk serves the area covered by the Suffolk Constabulary. Its main office is based at Ipswich. In the year ended March 2005 the Area employed 65.6 full time equivalent staff, and handled 23,466 cases, which included 4,952 (21.1%) where advice was given to the police before charge.

This press release and the report in relation to CPS Suffolk should be read in conjunction with HMCPPI'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 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.