

Press Notice

Embargoed until 00:01 14 March 2006



CPS Sussex

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

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 Sussex was **Good**.

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	Good
Leadership	Good
The service to victims and witnesses	Fair
Managing resources	Good
Other Defining Aspects	
Managing magistrates' courts cases	Fair
Managing Crown Court cases	Good
Handling sensitive cases and hate crimes	Good
Custody time limits	Fair
Disclosure	Good
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 decision-making in CPS Sussex is good. This is contributing to the Area's achievement, in conjunction with its criminal justice partners of most of the Government targets for the criminal justice system. The targets for reducing the level of ineffective trials (i.e. cases fixed for a contested hearing which do not proceed on the day fixed but are postponed) in the Crown Court, bringing offenders to justice and processing persistent young offenders (71 days from arrest to sentence) were all met in

2004-05. Whilst performance was improving, the Area did not meet its target for reducing the level of ineffective trials in the magistrates' courts. The Area's finances are managed well, with value for money principles keenly followed. The Area has demonstrated a commitment to performance management and has invested time and effort in developing its approach.

There was a need to strengthen some aspects of the Area's performance to ensure the robustness of its custody time limit system. In addition some aspects of the operation of the Direct Communication with Victims scheme needed to be strengthened. Whilst the Area's commitment towards engaging with the local community is positive, there is a need to review the structure of this aspect of the Area's work, to ensure that maximum value is obtained from the resources expended.

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

“This is an encouraging assessment for those who are served by CPS Sussex. The overall quality of casework is good and the Area's finances are well managed. The Area should build on its good performance and this assessment to improve even further. The focus for the future needs to be managing change efficiently in order to achieve better progression of magistrates' courts cases and to strengthen the service to victims and witnesses.”

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 Peter Taylor, Area Communications Officer, on 01273 765604.

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 Sussex serves the area covered by the Sussex Police. Its Headquarters are based in Hove. In the year ended March 2005 the Area employed 122 full time equivalent staff, and handled 35056 cases, which included 10,893 (31.1%) where advice was given to the police before charge.

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