

Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPsi) has today published its performance assessment of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) London, Waltham Forest borough.

This is one of a planned series of borough performance assessments of the units in CPS London. Reports on nine have been published today and those on a further ten boroughs, the traffic unit and an overarching report on CPS London as a whole will be published in March.

The overall performance assessment of Waltham Forest was **FAIR**.

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

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
Pre-charge advice and decisions	<b>2</b>	<b>Fair</b>
Decision-making, preparation and progression in magistrates' court cases	<b>2</b>	<b>Fair</b>
Decision-making, preparation and progression in Crown Court cases	<b>2</b>	<b>Fair</b>
The prosecution of cases at court	<b>3</b>	<b>Good</b>
Serious violent and sexual offences, and hate crimes	<b>2</b>	<b>Fair</b>
Disclosure	<b>2</b>	<b>Fair</b>
Custody time limits	<b>3</b>	<b>Good</b>
The service to victims and witnesses	<b>2</b>	<b>Fair</b>
Managing performance to improve	<b>2</b>	<b>Fair</b>
Managing resources	<b>Not scored</b>	
Management and partnership working	<b>2</b>	<b>Fair</b>
<b>OVERALL ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>FAIR</b>

The prosecution of cases at court was good, there is 'travel' in the right direction and performance has been improving. The handling of casework was mixed, with inspectors having some concerns over the quality of decision-making.

The proportion of magistrates' courts' cases that resulted in a successful outcome in the 12 months to June 2009 (83.8%) was lower than that for CPS London overall (85.9%) and nationally (87.3%). The proportion of successful cases in the Crown Court (70.2%) was also lower than London overall (72.7%) and nationally (80.6%). Caseload increased in the magistrates' courts by 19.3% and by 22.6% in those sent and committed to the Crown Court.

Staff had a good knowledge and awareness of the systems for ensuring custody time limits were not breached. The handling of the disclosure of unused material was improving.

Inspectors found that the borough could improve a number of aspects of its performance including the preparation of contested magistrates' courts' cases and the provision of information to victims and witnesses.

The focus on managing CPS performance is improving as is the joint management of performance with partners.

The benefits of co-location with the police have yet to be realised fully, but the position should improve when the CPS and police move to new premises. Despite the obvious difficulties in the borough, morale remains high amongst the staff.

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

*“Although we found the performance in Waltham Forest mixed, the overall direction of travel is positive. This assessment was achieved despite some circumstances in which the borough has worked while having to implement a number of national initiatives with increasing resource constraints. There are now positive signs of improvement and staff have remained supportive of each other during this period of change. It is important that recent improvements in performance are sustained.”*

This press release should be read in conjunction with the executive summary which is attached.

The full report is now available from the embargoed section of the inspectorate’s website ([www.hmcpsi.gov.uk](http://www.hmcpsi.gov.uk)) using the following details:

- Username: MEDIA99
- Password: LBPAJan10

For further information please contact Anisha Visram, HMCPSI’s media contact, on 020 7210 1187/07901 856 348.

#### **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 pilot performance assessment of Croydon borough, published in May 2009, was the first of a planned series of performance assessments of the individual borough units in CPS London.
- 3 There are 33 geographical units based on London boroughs and the cities of London and Westminster. CPS London also has a dedicated traffic unit and a complex casework centre which handles serious and complex cases and those at the Central Criminal Court (Old Bailey). CPS London provides advice to police and charging decisions through a telephone service, CPS London Direct, or where a face-to-face meeting is needed through the local borough units. The units are gathered into six districts based on Crown Court centres.
- 4 The assessment process provides a benchmark for the performance of the boroughs in ten key aspects of work, each of which is assessed as being excellent, good, fair or poor. The unit is then assessed on its overall performance in the light of these markings. The process also evaluates the management of resources at borough level.
- 5 The scoring mechanism is described in annex C of the report. This provides some limiters that apply in addition to the total of points scored. This is because of the significant impact that some aspects will have on the delivery of the borough’s core business, or because of the impact of a number of poor aspects.

- 6 The assessment included examination of finalised case files; interviews with representatives of partner criminal justice agencies and the judiciary; discussions with borough staff; observations at the office; and observations at the magistrates' court and Crown Court.
- 7 The findings from the assessments undertaken will be drawn together in a pan-CPS London report. As well as providing an overall picture of the area, this will address the issues that have emerged as the assessments have progressed. Some of these were of serious concern and need to be tackled urgently at a senior management level.
- 8 HMCPSI's original intention had been to assess all 33 boroughs in order to reflect the variations in performance which were expected across an area as diverse as CPS London, and this approach was endorsed by the area's senior managers. In the event findings from the early assessments showed a relatively narrow range of performance and consistency in the themes emerging and the aspects for improvement. London's senior management team confirmed that the boroughs which had been assessed were fairly representative of the area as a whole and that to undertake further assessments would be unlikely to add significantly to our findings. The inspectorate therefore decided to confine the exercise to 20 boroughs (including the pilot assessment of Croydon), drawn from five of the six districts, together with the traffic unit.