

Press Notice

Embargoed until 00:01 14 March 2006



CPS West Mercia

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

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 West Mercia 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	Good
Leadership	Fair
The service to victims and witnesses	Fair
Managing resources	Fair
Other Defining Aspects	
Managing magistrates' courts cases	Fair
Managing Crown Court cases	Good
Handling sensitive cases and hate crimes	Fair
Custody time limits	Fair
Disclosure	Fair
Presenting and progressing cases at court	Fair
Delivering change	Fair
Managing performance to improve	Fair
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.

The Area's performance against key casework targets is mixed. The Area is continuing to reduce the number of unsuccessful outcomes on cases, and met its target for asset recovery in relation to the proceeds of crime. In the Crown Court performance is generally good with a reduction in the number of ineffective trials (i.e. cases listed for contest which do not proceed on the day fixed but are postponed) and good casework handling systems. In the magistrates' courts however, performance is less consistent and a number of

targets were not met. The Area has recently refocused on the persistent offender target and this now shows signs of improvement.

CPS West Mercia works effectively with its partners in the delivery of change and improvement within the local criminal justice system locally. There is clear commitment by senior managers to securing public confidence and engaging with the community which has contributed to increased public confidence in the criminal justice system in West Mercia and a sound performance at bringing offenders to justice.

The Area's management of resources shows evidence of effective staff deployment and efforts to obtain value for money. There is an effective performance reporting framework and performance data is comprehensively analysed and discussed.

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

“CPS West Mercia demonstrates sound performance in most aspects of casework. Changes in performance reporting are already seeing a positive effect. There is a need to ensure that performance in the aspects of casework handling which are not so strong, are improved.”

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 Lynda Jackson on 01905 825008.

Notes to Editors

Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPISI) 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 HMCPISI using a combination of absolute and comparative assessments of performance. These came from national data, CPS self-assessment, HMCPISI 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 West Mercia serves the area covered by the West Mercia Constabulary. Its main office is based at Droitwich. In the year ended March 2005 the Area employed 111.3 full time equivalent staff, and handled 36,442 cases, which included 8,831 (24.2%) where advice was given to the police before charge.

This press release and the report in relation to CPS West Mercia should be read in conjunction with HMCPISI'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 HMCPISI'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.