

Press Notice

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CPS London North and East Sector

HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HM CPSI) has today published its Overall Performance Assessment (OPA) of CPS London North and East 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 North and East 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
Managing resources	Fair
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 North and East Sector has been taking firm action, in conjunction with its criminal justice partners, to improve case outcomes and casework management from what was a low baseline. Whilst the proportion of discontinued cases was pleasingly low, overall conviction rates in the magistrates' courts and the Crown Court in 2004-05 were not as good as in the other London Sectors or nationally. Some encouraging improvement in outcomes has been seen in the first two quarters of 2005-06. The handling of cases needs to be strengthened; in particular attention is needed to the undertaking of the prosecution's duties of disclosure of unused material, the monitoring of custody time limits, and the reduction of the number of committal cases that are discharged because the prosecution is not ready.

The Sector has good leadership and there is a well developed performance management framework which ensures that managers are clear about their responsibilities and focus, to carry out the improvements that are needed.

Statutory charging was successfully implemented in the Sector. Post implementation reviews indicated that the scheme was generally working well, with aspects of good practice. However, the Sector has yet to realise the full benefits of the scheme.

The effective trial management programme has been rolled out in all courts and there has been an improvement in the timeliness of preparation of cases, although the timeliness of cases involving persistent young offenders was 3 days outside the Government's target of 71 days from arrest to sentence. One witness care unit has been established with the City of London police and an increase in witness attendance has been noted.

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

It is encouraging to see that CPS London North and East Sector is addressing important aspects of its work positively, including both case outcomes and casework management. More recent figures show a trend of improvement from what was a low baseline. The Sector has laid the foundations to enable further improvement in outcomes and the development of control processes to be sustained. I am confident managers and staff alike will respond positively to the challenges ahead."

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

Notes to Editors

Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPsi) 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 HMCPsi using a combination of absolute and comparative assessments of performance. These came from national data, CPS self-assessment, HMCPsi 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 North and East Sector serves the area covered by the boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Camden, Havering, Islington, Newham, Redbridge, Waltham Forest, Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Enfield and Haringey all of which are covered by the Metropolitan Police Service. It also covers the City of London and cases brought by the City of London Police. Its main office is based at Stratford, London. In the year ended March 2005 the Sector employed 357.8 full time equivalent staff, and handled 71,058 cases, which included 10,661 (15%) where advice was given to the police before charge.

This press release and the report in relation to CPS London North and East Sector should be read in conjunction with HMCPsi'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 HMCPsi'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.