

# Press Notice

Embargoed until 00:01 14 March 2006



## CPS Hertfordshire

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

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 Hertfordshire was **Fair**.

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

<b>Critical Aspects</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
Pre-charge decision-making	Fair
Ensuring successful outcomes	Fair
Leadership	Good
The service to victims and witnesses	Good
Managing resources	Good
<b>Other Defining Aspects</b>	
Managing magistrates' courts cases	Poor
Managing Crown Court cases	Fair
Handling sensitive cases and hate crimes	Good
Custody time limits	Fair
Disclosure	Poor
Presenting and progressing cases at court	Good
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.

CPS Hertfordshire manages its Crown Court casework soundly whilst that in the magistrates' court was assessed as poor – an important factor being the number of cases due to be committed to the Crown Court which were discharged because the prosecution was not ready to proceed.

The proportion of CPS Hertfordshire's cases with unsuccessful outcomes is close to the national average but shows improvement in the Crown Court. In general, sensitive cases and hate crime are well handled with specialist involvement as necessary.

The anticipated benefits from the CPS taking over charging decisions are not yet being realised. Progress in improving the handling of unused material has been limited.

The Area delivers a good standard of service to victims and witnesses although communication with victims in all appropriate cases and the timeliness of same is variable.

Some change was implemented successfully in 2004-05 and there is a good level of supportive training. The Area has fewer ineffective trials caused by the prosecution than the national average, but significant trial backlogs have a negative impact on overall effective trial rates. This is recognised and is being addressed. Effective deployment of in-house advocates has increased significantly, with consequent resource savings. The prosecution budget is managed actively with systematic control and monitoring.

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

**“There is a clear commitment towards progressing initiatives aimed at improving the criminal justice system and towards enhancing the CPS role through development of in-house advocacy. However, there are also important aspects of performance in respect of which immediate effective action is required to raise standards to satisfactory levels.”**

The report is now available to journalists on an embargoed basis by visiting the Inspectorate's website ([www.hmcpai.gov.uk](http://www.hmcpai.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 HMCPAI Communications Section, on 020 7210 1143. If the query relates to the CPS, contact Linda Fox, Area Business Manager, on 01727 798741.

## **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 Hertfordshire serves the area covered by the Hertfordshire Constabulary. Its main office is based at St Albans. In the year ended March 2005 the Area employed 89.9 full time equivalent staff, and handled 24,126 cases, which included 4,253 (17.6%) where advice was given to the police before charge.

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