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HMP EAST SUTTON PARK – SAFE, DECENT AND EFFECTIVE

HMP East Sutton Park provides very good outcomes for the women it holds and the public as a whole, said Nick Hardwick, Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing the report of an announced inspection of the women's open prison in Kent.

HMP East Sutton Park is one of only two women's open prisons. It holds only 100 women who are carefully selected as being suitable for open conditions. On that basis, comparisons with other women's prisons need to be treated with caution, though many aspects of East Sutton Park epitomise what a good women's prison should be.

Inspectors were pleased to find that:

- East Sutton Park is a very safe place with very little bullying and no incidents of self-harm for some time;
- staff-prisoner relationships were a real strength backed up by an excellent personal officer scheme;
- good external work and training opportunities in the community helped prepare women for release; and
- there was a commendable focus on resettlement with good outcomes reflected in very positive reports from probation officers who worked with recently released women.

However, inspectors also found that:

- the recent withdrawal of a well-used counselling service had left a real gap;
- illicit drug use was virtually non-existent so some testing procedures seemed unnecessary and investment in the integrated drug treatment service may not have been needed;
- living conditions for most women in small and cramped dormitories were very poor and the lack of privacy caused tension; and
- neither East Sutton Park nor Askham Grange, the only other women's open prison, are accessible to women in wheelchairs, meaning they are unfairly denied access to open conditions.

Nick Hardwick said:

“There are still issues to address but East Sutton Park provides a safe and decent environment for the women it holds. It works hard to ensure effective resettlement and therefore to reduce the risk of reoffending. Although there are obvious differences, it has features that could usefully be replicated in other women's prisons.”

Michael Spurr, Chief Executive Officer of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), said:

“I'm pleased that East Sutton Park has been recognised for its good work around preparing women for their release. As a small, open prison it provides specialist resettlement support for the women in its care, in a safe and respectful environment. The Governor and staff will look to build on this report and maintain the high quality of service provided.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. A copy of the report can be found on the HM Inspectorate of Prisons website from 27 April 2012 at http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/inspectorate-reports/hmi-prisons/prison-and-yoi?result_33497_result_page=E
2. HM Inspectorate of Prisons is an independent inspectorate, inspecting places of detention to report on conditions and treatment, and promote positive outcomes for those detained and the public.
3. This announced inspection was carried out from 21-25 November 2011.
4. HMP East Sutton Park is a female open establishment with a resettlement function.
5. Please contact Jane Parsons in HMI Prisons Press Office on 0207 035 2123 or 07880 787452 if you would like more information or to request an interview with Nick Hardwick.