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**HMP DOWNVIEW & HMYOI DOWNVIEW'S JOSEPHINE BUTLER UNIT –  
STABILITY NEEDED SO IMPROVEMENTS CAN BE MADE**

HMP Downview needs a period of stability to drive through improvements, and progress in the Josephine Butler Unit had stalled in some important areas, said Nick Hardwick, Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing reports on the women's jail in Surrey, and the specialist unit within its grounds.

HMP Downview is a women's training prison which also acts as a centre for foreign national prisoners. It includes the separate Josephine Butler Unit for young women aged 17. These follow-up inspections took place at an unsettled time for the prison. In 2010, a number of serious allegations had been made against some managers and staff. There had been significant changes to the senior management team, and challenges included very low staff morale and staffing shortages. At its last inspection in 2008, inspectors found the prison was generally safe but with a lack of management structures to support safety.

In the main prison, inspectors were now pleased to find that:

- deficiencies in recording and monitoring the use of force, special accommodation and segregation had now been addressed;
- there was reasonably good support for women at risk of suicide and self-harm;

- good services to help women with substance use problems had been provided with the introduction of the integrated drug treatment system;
- very good progress had been made in implementing recommendations in health care; and
- most women continued to have access to a good range of activities, and most women had a good amount of time out of their cells.

However, inspectors were concerned to find that:

- unsurprisingly, the misconduct of a small number of staff had impacted on the quality of relationships between officers and prisoners, with some degree of distrust on both sides;
- the number of male officers almost equalled that of female officers, and this was too many for a women's prison;
- the Hibiscus service to support foreign national women had been withdrawn without any replacement; and
- resettlement work had failed to develop.

The last inspection of the Josephine Butler Unit in 2010 found an impressive facility with outstanding education provision. This inspection, carried out 18 months later, disappointingly found that insufficient progress had been made in the areas of respect and resettlement, although there had been sufficient progress in safety and purposeful activity.

In the Josephine Butler Unit inspectors were pleased to find that:

- there was improved engagement with the local authority children's service;
- aspects of safeguarding had improved and there had been good progress in some areas of behaviour management;
- health care was excellent;
- young women still had plenty of time out of their cells; and

- shorter units of accreditation in learning and skills provision had been introduced to suit young women on remand or serving short sentences.

Inspectors have identified increasing problems for young people during transportation to young offender institutions since the introduction of new escort contracts and the Josephine Butler Unit was no exception. Inspectors were concerned to find that young women reported very negatively on their treatment by escorts.

Other concerns included:

- young women were less positive about the help they received from staff;
- there had been no progress in developing the approach to diversity;
- the environment seemed less age-appropriate than at its previous inspection;
- serious staff shortages were affecting the delivery of learning and skills provision, although young women generally worked well and gained useful qualifications; and
- the revised resettlement policy was inadequate and the careers support from Connexions had ceased altogether.

Nick Hardwick said:

“Downview has the potential to be a very good women’s prison. It has a generally settled population, relatively low levels of self-harm and a decent range of activities to keep women occupied. Opportunities to drive forward progress were derailed when allegations were made against staff and management attention focused on dealing with these. There are signs that the prison is beginning to get through this crisis, but it needs a period of stability in staffing and management to allow it to build on its strengths and drive through improvements.

“At the Josephine Butler Unit, considerable effort had gone into developing a working relationship with the local authority children’s services and changing the way that staff dealt with difficult and challenging behaviour with positive results. However an age-appropriate environment and good relationships between staff and young women are equally important in maintaining a safe and orderly unit and there is a need for unit staff to address these concerns. The impact of poor escort arrangements should not be underestimated. We hope that the Youth Justice Board and Offender Management Service will act swiftly and work with the providers to address the problem.”

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

“This is a positive report that recognises the good work that the Governor and staff are doing to meet the needs of the women in their care. I am pleased that Downview continues to improve in key areas such as safety, health care and purposeful activity.

“Managers on the Josephine Butler Unit are working hard to address the areas where the Inspector found that improvement was required, including staff-prisoner relationships and resettlement.”

ENDS

**Notes to Editors:**

1. A copy of the report can be found on the HM Inspectorate of Prisons website from 26 January 2012 at <http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/inspectorate-reports/hmi-prisons/prison-and-yoi-inspections/index.htm>
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. These unannounced short follow-up inspections were carried out from 20-23 September 2011.

4. HMP Downview is a closed adult female training prison. The Josephine Butler Unit is attached to the women's prison and holds 17-year-old young women, whether sentenced, convicted or remanded by the courts.
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.