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HMP LIVERPOOL – MAKING SLOW PROGRESS

HMP Liverpool was making progress, albeit slowly, and with some significant gaps, said Nick Hardwick, Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing the report of an unannounced inspection of the local Merseyside jail.

HMP Liverpool is a large, local prison. Previous inspections have found very little progress made in addressing some deep-rooted problems. It is to the credit of the current management and staff that this inspection found progress being made.

Inspectors were pleased to find that:

- prisoners said they felt safer in the prison than at the last inspection, and the recorded level of fights and assaults had fallen significantly;
- levels of self-harm were relatively low, although there was no room for complacency;
- more prisoners than at similar prisons said they had a member of staff to turn to if they had a problem;
- the prison's work on diversity had a new, positive impetus and health services remained good;
- prisoners could spend more time out of their cells, and a greater range of activity was available;

- the new reducing reoffending strategy was based on a thorough needs assessment but had not been in place long enough to assess its impact; and
- the prison was well placed to implement its learning and skills strategy.

However, most vulnerable prisoners had, at some time, feared for their safety in the prison. Problems with first night procedures were a significant factor.

There were designated first night landings for ordinary and vulnerable prisoners, but neither had the capacity to cope with the flow of prisoners. Most vulnerable prisoners had a very poor induction, and the vulnerable prisoner wing did not have space for all. Inspectors found incidents of vulnerable prisoners who had been assaulted on the main wings. Poor arrangements for securing the safety of vulnerable prisoners restricted their aspect to almost all other parts of the regime, which was unacceptable.

Inspectors were also concerned to find that:

- both violence reduction and suicide and self-harm monitoring procedures needed more consistent implementation on the wings and a greater emphasis on tackling underlying causes;
- the incentives and earned privileges (IEP) scheme was too often used as a crude punishment system with little emphasis on encouraging good behaviour;
- one wing landing had been designed a “reintegration unit” for prisoners on the ‘basic’ level of the IEP scheme, which was little different from segregation but without the safeguards segregation would require;
- despite friendly interactions, mutual expectations between staff and prisoners appeared low;
- the prison struggled to keep old buildings decent and habitable; and
- resettlement resources were not adequate to meet the needs of the population held, with backlogs of the reviews necessary to address offending behaviour and little planning for short-term prisoners.

Nick Hardwick said:

“The challenge of making the improvements that HMP Liverpool requires should not be underestimated. There is still a need for significant improvements and some aspects of the regime – particularly the treatment of vulnerable prisoners and those on the basic incentives level – are unacceptable. However, overall this inspection found improvements were being made and the prison had some encouraging plans for the future, although they were still too new to be judged during this inspection. We hope that by the time of our next inspection these plans will have borne fruit and the improvements we began to see on this inspection will have accelerated.”

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

“I am pleased that the Chief Inspector recognises and acknowledges the progress the prison has made.

"Given the large and transitory population the continuing improvements in self-harm prevention, purposeful activity and healthcare are particularly noteworthy.

"The Governor and his team will now address the areas of concern highlighted by the report to continue to drive sustained improvement."

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. A copy of the report can be found on the HM Inspectorate of Prisons website from 4 May 2012 at http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/inspectorate-reports/hmi-prisons/prison-and-yoi?result_33497_result_page=L
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 unannounced full follow-up inspection was carried out from 8-16 December 2011.

4. HMP Liverpool accommodates category B and C convicted male adults and remand and unconvicted men sentenced by courts in the Merseyside area.
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.