



21 February 2012

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**NOT FOR PUBLICATION BEFORE 00.01, THURSDAY, 23 FEBRUARY 2012**

### **HMP MAIDSTONE – MANY STRENGTHS BUT SIGNIFICANT SHORTCOMINGS**

HMP Maidstone had many strengths and was undertaking some bold initiatives, but had significant shortcomings which needed to be addressed, said Nick Hardwick, Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing the report of an announced inspection of the Kent training jail.

HMP Maidstone holds almost 600 men, four out of five of whom are sex offenders and one in three of whom are foreign national prisoners. The prison ran a fully integrated regime where foreign national prisoners and sex offenders were accommodated on the same wings and took part in the same activities. This has been done safely and enhanced the ability of all prisoners to benefit from opportunities provided by the prison.

Inspectors were pleased to find that:

- the prison had worked hard to develop the 'working prison model' and the print workshop in particular provided prisoners with a realistic working day;
- there was an effective prisoners' council, which encouraged prisoners to maintain responsible behaviour and contributed to dynamic security;
- relationships between staff and prisoners were generally good;
- cells, communal areas and grounds were clean and well kept;

- drug use was very low;
- health care was good; and
- half the population were assessed as posing a risk of serious harm and these risks were well managed.

However, inspectors had some concerns:

- the prison was designated to hold foreign national prisoners, but this area needed significant improvement: there was no dedicated foreign national co-ordinator and a lack of even essential translated material;
- there were too few meaningful work and training opportunities available for a training prison;
- there were insufficient places available on sex offender programmes to meet the needs of the population, meaning too many prisoners were released back into the community without their behaviour being challenged; and
- arrangements for tackling and reducing incidents of bullying needed to be improved.

Nick Hardwick said:

“Maidstone delivers reasonably good outcomes for most prisoners in most areas. Some of the work it does is excellent and innovative. Nevertheless, there are some significant gaps – particularly around the amount of good quality work and training available, meeting the needs of foreign national prisoners and providing the programmes necessary to comprehensively address the offending behaviour of its sex offender population. The good work it has done in other areas suggests these shortcomings can be addressed as well, if tackled with the same vigour.”

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

“This is a generally good report on a prison which is doing some innovative work with a challenging population. I am particularly pleased with the positive comments about the work facilities and rehabilitation at Maidstone.

“The Governor and his staff are working hard to address the areas where the Inspector found that improvement was required, including its specialist provisions for sex offenders and foreign nationals. Maidstone is already adapting quickly to the working prison model and protecting the public will continue to be at the core of its work.”

ENDS

**Notes to Editors:**

1. A copy of the report can be found on the HM Inspectorate of Prisons website from 23 February 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. This announced inspection was carried out from 19-23 September 2011.
4. HMP Maidstone is a category C training prison for sex offenders and foreign national prisoners.
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.