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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **HMP STANDFORD HILL – SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

HMP Stanford Hill was now in a position to make necessary progress after a period of coasting, said Nick Hardwick, Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing the report of an unannounced inspection of the Isle of Sheppey open prison.

HMP Stanford Hill had previously been managed as part of a 'cluster' of Isle of Sheppey prisons. While some services were still shared, Stanford Hill now had its own governor and, after a period of change, was settling down and focusing on making improvements. Preparing men, most of whom were coming to the end of long sentences, for law-abiding and productive lives back in the community should have been the prison's central purpose and a key part of the job of everyone who worked there. This was not always the case. Despite some good work in individual areas, resettlement work was fragmented and work to address offending behaviour was too limited. However, there were good opportunities for men to take part in voluntary or paid work or education outside the prison and to rebuild family contacts.

Inspectors were pleased to find that:

- there were few violent incidents and incidents of self-harm and use of force were low;
- the use of Listeners was excellent;
- living conditions were generally good, diversity work was generally sound and health care had improved; and

- there was a good range of activity available in and out of the prison.

However, inspectors were concerned to find that:

- staff-prisoner relationships were polite and professional but there was little proactive engagement by staff;
- a surprisingly high number of prisoners reported not feeling safe;
- first night procedures were weak and left men who had served long sentences in closed conditions apprehensive about the greater autonomy they had at Standford Hill;
- there had been a significant drop in the number of security reports received, a possible consequence of staff not engaging sufficiently with prisoners;
- although the drug testing rate was low, there was some evidence that some prescribed drugs were being traded;
- the under-representation of black and minority ethnic prisoners among those working out in the community or in the better accommodation was a significant concern;
- some food that was served was not fit for consumption, including meat products served while still frozen; and
- the levies deducted under the Prisoners' Earning Act had begun to mean, in a few cases, that prisoners could no longer afford to travel to work, which meant they lost the resettlement opportunities, which was counter-productive.

Nick Hardwick said:

“Until relatively recently, Standford Hill appears to have been coasting. Outcomes are reasonable in most areas but the prison is exposed by some significant areas of concern. Reassuringly, work had already started to address the concerns we identified. It was overdue and it is

to be hoped that a period of more stable management will enable the prison to make the rapid progress required.”

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

“Standford Hill has made some good progress despite a transition period to a new management structure. I am pleased the Chief Inspector found that the prison has made progress in the areas of concern and I am confident that the new team will drive forward further improvements.”

ENDS

**Notes to Editors:**

1. A copy of the report can be found on the HM Inspectorate of Prisons website from 8 May 2012 at [http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/inspectorate-reports/hmi-prisons/prison-and-yoi?result\\_33497\\_result\\_page=S](http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/inspectorate-reports/hmi-prisons/prison-and-yoi?result_33497_result_page=S)
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 5-9 December 2011.
4. HMP Standford Hill is a category D open establishment for male offenders.
5. Please contact Jane Parsons in HMI Prisons Press Office on 0207 035 2123 or 07880 787452 if you would like more information.