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**HMP WOODHILL – SOME IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED,
BUT GENERALLY SAFE AND STABLE**

HMP Woodhill was reasonably well managed, but needed greater focus on some high risk areas, and on providing more activity for prisoners, said Nick Hardwick, Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing the report of an unannounced inspection of the high security local jail near Milton Keynes.

HMP Woodhill is one of the more complex prisons and a significant management challenge. As one of three core local prisons in the high security estate, Woodhill combines a normal local prison function serving the courts with an additional responsibility holding high risk and category A prisoners. It also has smaller more specialist facilities, including two protected witness units and two close supervision centres (CSCs) holding some of the country's most disruptive prisoners. Recent inspections have acknowledged the prison's success in managing these competing pressures and in maintaining a proportionate approach to the very real challenges of security. However, inspectors have in the past criticised the lack of sufficient activity to occupy prisoners, and this inspection found that the situation remained the same.

Inspectors were pleased to find that:

- the prison had in place solid systems to tackle bullying and violence, and few prisoners reported feeling unsafe;

- the prison continued to successfully manage the balance between the security requirements of the high risk minority without needlessly impacting on the regime outcomes for the majority;
- the quality of accommodation was among the best in the estate and relationships across the prison continued to be a strength;
- equality was well promoted; and
- offender management for higher risk prisoners and those who could access it was reasonably good, and resettlement provision was reasonably good.

However, inspectors had some concerns:

- risk assessments for young adult prisoners needed to be more robust;
- use of force was high and the use of special accommodation was excessive;
- the number of self-harm incidents had risen considerably over the previous 12 months and this trend needed addressing;
- the close supervision centre was concerning, and inspectors were not fully assured that adequate safeguards were in place;
- primary mental health provision was inadequate, and there were concerns about the accessibility of mental health services for those held in the CSC;
- there was a lack of sufficient activity to occupy prisoners, and around half the population was not engaged in any purposeful activity;
- the provision of vocational training was limited and the education places on offer were underused; and
- too few prisoners benefitted from meaningful sentence management and public protection arrangements required improvement.

Nick Hardwick said:

“Overall this inspection describes a prison little changed from when we last inspected. The complexity of the establishment is managed reasonably well and the vast majority of prisoners are not disadvantaged because of the additional security needs of the few. The prison is stable and generally safe but more management attention is required across a number of high risk areas such as self-harm prevention, segregation and the CSC. The need to occupy the prisoners more fully and purposefully remains unaddressed.

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

"Woodhill holds some of the most difficult and disruptive prisoners who present a unique set of challenges for the management and staff of the establishment. I am pleased that the Chief Inspector found that, despite its complex context, the prison continues to provide a decent, stable and safe environment.

"Action has already been taken to reinforce management oversight of high risk areas and the Governor has prioritised improvements in the level of purposeful activity."

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. A copy of the report can be found on the HM Inspectorate of Prisons website from 22 June 2012 at http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/inspectorate-reports/hmi-prisons/prison-and-yoi?result_33497_result_page=W
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 inspection was carried out from 3-13 January 2012.

4. HMP Woodhill is a core local prison within the high security estate. It accommodates remand and convicted adult and young adult prisoners, who are categorised from category D to category A. It also accommodates prisoners managed under close supervision (CSC)/Rule 46 and Managing Challenging Behaviour Strategy (MCBS).
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.