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HMP DONCASTER – MANY STRENGTHS, BUT MORE PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY NEEDED

HMP Doncaster was a well-run, busy city-centre prison, but it needed to increase the amount of work, education and training available for prisoners, said Nick Hardwick, Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing the report of an unannounced inspection of the South Yorkshire local prison.

Doncaster holds just over 1,000 remand and sentenced young and adult male prisoners, and processes 2,000 new arrivals a month, with many prisoners doubled up in cells designed for one. It had a zero tolerance approach to substance use and violence, enforced by a tough scheme that regulated prisoners' entitlements according to their behaviour.

Inspectors were pleased to find that:

- despite some reservations, the overall approach to substance misuse and violence was effective, with relatively low drug use and a sharp fall in the number of adjudications (the most serious disciplinary process) since the last inspection;
- prisoners reported positively on the way staff treated them, and we saw excellent staff-prisoner relationships in the segregation unit;
- incentives for good behaviour were underpinned by very good resettlement work which provided motivation for prisoners who wanted to resettle successfully when they left the prison; and
- the work with families was among the best this inspectorate has seen.

However, inspectors had some concerns:

- the incentives and earned privileges scheme that regulated prisoners' entitlements according to behaviour was too restrictive and applied inconsistently;
- vulnerable prisoners had a poor regime and were locked in their cells for most of the day; and
- there was not enough work, training or education available with the equivalent of full-time activity places for only half the population.

Nick Hardwick said:

“Doncaster prison was a challenging prison to run – but the prison rose to that challenge well. It sought to maintain a proper balance between security and respect and was largely successful in doing so. The work with families was among the best I have seen and there was some excellent work to help fathers of young children and babies sustain positive contact with their families.

“However, the prison needed to improve the regime for vulnerable prisoners, and provide more activity places for all prisoners. There wasn't enough education, training or work available. Prison capacity is not simply a matter of how many prisoners can be crammed into the cells – it is also a matter of whether the prison has the resources and space to do anything useful with them.”

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

"Doncaster is a secure and well-run prison that manages violence and substance misuse effectively. Staff have positive relationships with prisoners with incentives for good behaviour and strong resettlement provision. Work with families is also good which helps towards reducing re-offending and protecting the public.

"From October, the new contract for the operation of Doncaster by Serco will include an element of payment by results, ensuring best value for the taxpayer by incentivising work to prevent reoffending.

"Staff are working to increase the amount of purposeful activity available at the prison."

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. A copy of the report can be found on the HM Inspectorate of Prisons website from 14 April 2011 at www.justice.gov.uk/inspection/hmi-prisons
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 2-12 November 2010.
4. HMP Doncaster is a category B local prison for both young and adult male prisoners. It is managed privately by Serco.
5. Please contact Jane Parsons in HMI Prisons Press Office on 0207 035 2123 or 07880 787452 from 0915 to 1415 Monday to Friday if you would like more information or to request an interview with Nick Hardwick.