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HMYOI STOKE HEATH – GOOD PROVISION FOR UNDER-18s

Provision for young people at Stoke Heath remained reasonably good, said Nick Hardwick, Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing the report of an unannounced inspection of the juvenile part of the young offender institution in Shropshire.

At the time of inspection, HMYOI Stoke Heath held young adults aged 18 to 21 and young people under 18. This inspection focused only on the younger population. Since then, the Youth Justice Board announced the relocation of these young people, following the reduction in their numbers in custody across the country and the need to rationalise the juvenile secure estate. This report provides a suitable testament to the success of managers and staff in managing this challenging population. Given Stoke Heath's change of role, the report makes no recommendations.

Inspectors were pleased to find that:

- Stoke Heath remained an essentially safe place for young people, with sound safeguarding arrangements, a robust approach to reducing bullying and good care for those at risk of self-harm;
- relationships between staff and young people were positive, supported by an effective personal officer scheme;

- education had improved significantly, with many young people gaining some form of accreditation, and there was a range of vocational opportunities;
- the strategic management of resettlement remained reasonable and there was increased practical help to assist young people to plan for their release, including good support to address substance misuse and to maintain family ties.

However, inspectors also noted that:

- violent incidents remained a serious problem and, in response, use of force and segregation was also high;
- the establishment was a poor design for young people, with overly large units that were hard to control; and
- there was routine strip-searching on arrival, which was unnecessary.

Nick Hardwick said:

“With the removal of young people from Stoke Heath, staff and managers can now focus all their energies on a dedicated population of young adults. This essentially positive final report means that the establishment can look back on a successful closing chapter dealing with young people – whom, it is to be hoped, will be as well cared for in the other parts of the juvenile secure estate to which they have now been moved.”

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

"I am pleased that this report recognises the success of staff at Stoke Heath in managing a challenging population and I welcome the assessment that the establishment is safe, with good staff-prisoner relationships and education, and effective resettlement provision.

“The number of young people under 18 in custody is reducing, leading to a change in the Stoke Heath's role, and the Governor and his staff will continue to work hard with young adults to ensure effective public protection and to reduce the risk of reoffending on release.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. A copy of the report can be found on the HM Inspectorate of Prisons website from 17 May 2011 at www.justice.gov.uk/inspectors/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 short follow-up inspection was carried out from 13-17 December 2010.
4. HMYOI Stoke Heath is a young offender institution holding young adult males aged 18-21. At the time of this inspection, Stoke Heath also held male juveniles aged 15-17.
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.