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020 7035 2123

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HMP LEICESTER – GOOD PROGRESS

There had been significant improvements in a number of areas at HMP Leicester, said Nick Hardwick, Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing the report of an unannounced inspection of the local city-centre prison.

HMP Leicester is small and crowded with a transient and needy population. A previous inspection found the prison was beginning to rise to these challenges but there was more to do.

Inspectors were pleased to find that:

- Leicester remained reasonably safe, with adequate suicide and self-harm arrangements and proportionate security;
- clinical support to substance users was good;
- staff-prisoner relationships were generally positive and the personal officer scheme was improving;
- time out of cell had improved, accompanied by an increase in purposeful activity, and improved education provision; and
- there had been a sound focus on resettlement, with good strategic planning and management and a number of useful reintegration services available.

Inspectors also noted, however, that:

- the Victorian prison environment remained worn and cramped, despite efforts to maintain standards;
- although few prisoners were unemployed, the range and quality of activities was limited; and
- healthcare was undergoing a period of changes, and was the subject of complaints from prisoners.

Nick Hardwick said:

“Leicester is a small, complex local prison which has to address the many risks and needs posed by its transient population in an ageing and inadequate environment. Commendably, this report identifies a good deal of progress against our previous recommendations and, therefore, some success in overcoming a number of these challenges. As a result, Leicester is now performing reasonably well against all our tests of a healthy prison.”

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

"I am pleased that the Chief Inspector records the progress made at Leicester despite the difficulties the prison faces in terms of the ageing physical infrastructure.

“The Governor and staff are maintaining a safe and decent environment with a strong focus on resettlement. Positive relationships with staff and effective resettlement all reduce the likelihood of re-offending and help to protect the public.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. A copy of the report can be found on the HM Inspectorate of Prisons website from 24 February 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 4-7 October 2010.
4. HMP Leicester is a category B local prison for adult males.
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.