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HMP BLUNDESTON – AN EFFECTIVE TRAINING PRISON

HMP Blundeston had made progress and had become an effective training prison, said Dame Anne Owers, Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing the report of an unannounced short follow-up inspection of the men's training prison in Suffolk.

This inspection found that Blundeston, a small training prison, remained a generally safe and respectful environment, and had succeeded in improving its activity and resettlement work since its last inspection in early 2006.

Inspectors found:

- The prison was reasonably safe, with little self-harm or violence, but procedures to support safer custody and violence reduction needed to be strengthened and managed consistently.
- Drug use also appeared to be low – though there was a need to reduce and control opiate-based medication.
- In the absence of in-cell sanitation, many of the prisoners at Blundeston continued to rely on a highly unsatisfactory night sanitation system.
- Relationships between staff and prisoners were good and positive.
- Diversity, race and foreign nationals work had expanded, and needed to do so, given the divergence between the prison's population and its local environment and staffing.
- Blundeston now had sufficient work and activity places for all its population, in spite of recently increased numbers. There was a diverse range of good quality education and vocational training, minimal waiting lists and effective allocation arrangements.
- Resettlement had improved significantly. The Foundation Training Company continued to provide excellent pre-release work, and a drop-in centre allowed prisoners easy access to the agencies and services providing advice and support. However, the main obstacle remained the distance from home of many prisoners, most of whom were from London or even further afield.

Anne Owers said:

“It is pleasing to be able to record progress at Blundeston, which is now an effective training prison with good resettlement support.

“It has the benefit of still being a relatively small training prison, able to rely on personal relationships and with the ability to assess and respond to its prisoners’ needs.

“However, the continued use of unsanitary living accommodation and the distance from home of the majority of its prisoners stand as evidence of a pressurised prison system that struggles to provide decent environments and effective resettlement work for all its prisoners.”

Phil Wheatley, Director General of the National Offender Management Service, said:

“I am pleased that the Chief Inspector recognises the significant improvements in activity and resettlement work, as well as constructive relationships with staff, which will help to rehabilitate prisoners so that they do not re-offend on release.

“Blundeston has recently been awarded the highest Prison Service performance rating. This report is a further indication of the continued progress being made, of which the Governor and staff should be proud.”

Notes for Editors

1. A copy of the full report can be found on the HM Inspectorate of Prisons website from 3 February 2009 at <http://inspectors.justice.gov.uk/hmiprison>
2. The short unannounced follow-up inspection of HMP Blundeston was carried out from 16-18 June 2008. The last full inspection of HMP Blundeston took place from 27 February-3 March 2006.
3. The operational capacity at HMP Blundeston is 526.
4. HMP Blundeston opened in 1963 with four single cell wings for 288 prisoners. Two multi-cell wings were added in 1975, and the new 40-bed unit houses the therapeutic community. HMP Blundeston was a category B training prison until May 2002. The average age (30) and sentence length (mostly over four years) of the population is higher than in most category C prisons.
5. Anne Owers, Chief Inspector of Prisons, is available for interview. If you would like to speak to her please contact the Press Office on 0203 334 3530.