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0207 210 8722

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HMP CARDIFF: POSITIVE WORK DESPITE OVERCROWDING

HMP Cardiff was doing some positive work, despite overcrowding, said Anne Owers, Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing the report of an announced inspection into the prison in Wales.

Although it held about 750 prisoners in accommodation meant for 524, the inner-city prison was found to be performing reasonably well across four key areas – safety, respect, purposeful activity and resettlement.

Inspectors found:

- Prisoners were much more likely to report feeling safe than at other local prisons. This relied considerably on good relationships with staff.
- Support for newly-arrived prisoners was good, except for those who were housed in the progression unit alongside a troubling mix of bullies, victims and those on the basic regime. Anti-bullying procedures had improved since the last inspection.
- Given the age of much of the accommodation, Cardiff was commendably clean – though, as ever in local prisons, it was unacceptable that two prisoners shared single cells.
- In spite of poor accommodation, which was due to be replaced, healthcare services were good, though primary mental healthcare needed development.
- Black and minority ethnic prisoners, and those from distant areas, were less positive about staff;
- There was not enough purposeful activity for all prisoners, over a third of whom were not engaged in activity at any one time, and were mostly locked up for long periods. However, the provision that did exist was good.
- Resettlement was in general developing well, though it was noticeably better for prisoners from Wales.

Anne Owers said:

“Overall, this report reflects the positive work that is being done at Cardiff, in spite of the pressures and difficulties within the prison system. The prison’s great strength is its local links and ethos, and the support it is able to obtain from Welsh statutory, private and voluntary organisations.

“It is, however, unable to build on these most effectively, while it continues to import prisoners from England and export those from south Wales. The Welsh Director of Offender Management should examine the prison estate in south Wales, with a view to ensuring that it more closely matches the profile of Welsh prisoners.”

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

“I welcome the Chief Inspector’s recognition of the good work at Cardiff and I join her in congratulating the Governor and her staff for the strong links the prison has forged and maintained with the local community.

“I am confident that Cardiff will continue to provide a safe and respectful environment. Planned improvements in the provision for purposeful activity, including changes to the allocation of work, will mean an increased number of prisoners will be able to access education and training at Cardiff.”

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. A full copy of the HMCIP report into HMP Cardiff is available from <http://inspectrates.justice.gov.uk/hmiprison/>
2. HMP Cardiff is a category B local/training prison for adult male prisoners.
3. At the time of the inspection it had an operational capacity of 754.
4. The announced inspection took place on 7-11 January 2008.
5. Anne Owers is available for media interviews. Please call 0207 210 8722 to arrange an interview.