



June 2009

020 3334 3527

NOT FOR PUBLICATION BEFORE 00.01, 23 JUNE 2009

HMYOI CASTINGTON – REVIEW ESSENTIAL AFTER INJURIES FOLLOWING USE OF FORCE

HMYOI Castington was performing reasonably well in most ways, but there had been an unacceptably high number of serious injuries to young people over a two-year period as a result of the use of force by staff, said Dame Anne Owers, Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing the report of a full announced inspection of the young offender institution in Northumberland.

Castington holds juveniles aged 15–17 and young adults aged 18–21 separately on the same site. Inspectors have frequently found that such split sites are difficult to manage, so gave managers credit for effectively managing their complicated set-up.

Inspectors found:

- Early days in custody and anti-bullying arrangements were generally well managed, although detoxification procedures were underdeveloped. Aspects of safeguarding and child protection required reinforcement.
- Anti-bullying arrangements were reasonable, though a high proportion of young adults said they had felt unsafe at the establishment. The security department was taking a thoughtful and proportionate approach to those thought to be involved in gangs. However suicide and self-harm prevention paperwork was inconsistent and drug detoxification was underdeveloped.
- The number of times force was used was comparable to similar establishments. The principal concern in this area was the discovery that, over a two-year period, the use of control and restraint on young people had led to seven confirmed fractures and three suspected fractures. Inspectors had never previously come across so many serious injuries sustained in this way. These incidents had been thoroughly investigated internally but no coherent explanation had emerged for the scale and frequency of these injuries.
- Relationships between staff and young people were mixed, but the general atmosphere was relaxed. Diversity remained underdeveloped.
- The quantity and quality of purposeful activity for juveniles was very good, with plenty of time out of cell and good education and work opportunities. Provision for young adults was not as generous, with less time out of cell and fewer learning and skills spaces.
- Juvenile resettlement casework was sound, with good quality training plans. The offender management model was effectively applied to all young adults,

and sentence planning was generally sound. Some resettlement services, particularly accommodation and finance, needed development.

- Castington also housed Oswald Unit, a national resource for serious juvenile offenders with long sentences. In many ways an impressive unit, it would benefit from a clear national strategy for the care and management of young people serving long sentences.

Dame Anne Owers said:

“Managers at Castington deserve considerable credit for effectively managing their complicated split site, in which two challenging populations receive different levels of investment.

“It is an establishment that is performing reasonably well on most of our measures of a healthy prison. However, our judgment on safety was inevitably overshadowed by the worrying number of serious injuries suffered by young people as result of the use of force by staff. Managers had thoroughly examined each case but could offer no coherent explanation for the scale and frequency of these incidents.

“It is, therefore, essential that a further and comprehensive review is undertaken by a senior figure independent of the establishment so that lessons can be learned and the possibility of any repetitions minimised.”

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

“The Chief Inspector rightly recognises the effective management at Castington which provides a purposeful regime with good relationships between staff and prisoners within the context of managing a challenging group of young people.

“Any use of force that results in injury is fully investigated, and the incidents in which young people sustained broken wrists prompted a review into the use of restraint at Castington. We accepted and implemented the Chief Inspector’s recommendation that a further and comprehensive review should be undertaken by a senior figure independent of the establishment so that lessons can be learned and the possibility of any repetitions minimised. This investigation has now been commissioned.”

Notes for Editors

1. The full report can be found on the HM Inspectorate of Prisons website from 23 June 2009 at <http://inspectors.justice.gov.uk/hmiprison>
2. The short unannounced follow-up inspection of HMYOI Castington was carried out 19-23 January 2009.
3. The operational capacity at HMYOI Castington at the time of the inspection was 410.
4. The last inspection of HMYOI Castington took place from 12-16 June 2006.
5. Originally a satellite of HMP Acklington, Castington became independent in 1983, when it was used to accommodate long-term offenders up to the age of 21. At the beginning of 1999, a further unit was opened to hold unconvicted young people, and in April 2000 was again re-roled to become part of the juvenile estate as well as a young offender prison. A

section 91 unit was opened in August 2000 to hold up to 40 juvenile offenders and is a national resource.

6. Anne Owers, Chief Inspector, is available for interview. If you would like to speak to her please contact Tom Hodson in the Press Office on 0203 334 3527.