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DONCASTER: SOME OUTSTANDING CONCERNS

HMP Doncaster had made progress in some areas, including resettlement, but needed to do more to ensure safety, improve healthcare and increase purposeful activity, said Anne Owers, Chief Inspector of Prisons.

A full, unannounced inspection into the privately-run prison showed an improvement in the general environment with sound staff-prisoner relations that were being further bolstered by a culture change programme among staff. Early days in custody were better managed and the inspectorate's recommendation for a first-night centre had been implemented. Resettlement provision at Doncaster was among the best in the country for a busy local prison.

However, inspectors also found:

- two-person cells had been turned into three-person cells by placing a bed in the shared toilet
- there had been a worrying deterioration in healthcare, with poor access to a GP or dentist
- incidents of violence and self-harm had increased, with frailties in both anti-bullying and suicide prevention arrangements.
- little progress had been made in expanding the very limited amount of purposeful activity
- Some prisoners at risk of self-harm were inappropriately held in a healthcare dormitory

Anne Owers said:

“Doncaster has addressed a number of the criticisms that we made on our last visit, and continued to make good progress in areas such as resettlement. However, there is much still to do, not least to ensure that safety is maintained and the serious deficits in healthcare urgently addressed. There has also been a disappointing lack of progress in responding to our previous concerns about the inadequate quantity and quality of purposeful activity. Nevertheless, there is much that is positive at Doncaster. The director and his

staff need to build on these attributes, while addressing the outstanding concerns set out in this report.”

Michael Spurr, Chief Operating Officer for the National Offender Management Service, said:

“I am pleased that the Chief Inspector has acknowledged the progress made at Doncaster since her last inspection. However there remain areas for improvement and these will be monitored closely.

“The Director at Doncaster has introduced a Safer Custody Team to lead on reducing self harm, suicide, violence and bullying at the prison.

“Serco Health began providing the prison with healthcare facilities shortly before this inspection. Regular performance audits and policy reviews to ensure that the standard of care and level of service provided mirrors that of the National Health Service have also been introduced.

“Work to increase the level of purposeful activity at Doncaster has begun and new programmes in customer service, nutrition, and horticulture will shortly be introduced.”

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. A full copy of the HMCIP report into HMP Doncaster is available from <http://inspectrates.justice.gov.uk/hmiprisons/>
2. HMP Doncaster is a category B local prison accommodating both young and adult prisoners. HMP Doncaster is a contracted-out prison. The contract is currently managed by the Regional Offender Manager, Yorkshire and Humberside.
3. At the time of the inspection it had an operational capacity of 1,145.
4. The announced inspection took place on 11 – 15 February 2008.
5. Anne Owers will be on leave, the Deputy Chief Inspector, Nigel Newcomen, is available for media interviews. Please call 0207 210 8029 to arrange an interview.