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HMP/YOI DOWNVIEW– A WELL-MANAGED PRISON

Downview women's prison was performing reasonably well in all key areas, though systems to support safety needed to be strengthened, said Anne Owers, Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing the report of an announced inspection of the training prison on the outskirts of London.

Inspectors found:

- Downview was a safe prison with relatively low levels of self-harm, but systems to support safety were not robust. First night and induction procedures were weak and support for women at risk of self-harm or bullying was variable and inconsistent.
- There had been a significant drugs problem, and drug testing needed to be more consistent.
- There were positive relationships between staff and prisoners but this was not reflected in an active personal officer scheme - though the great majority of women said that they could turn to staff for help.
- The needs of foreign national women were not clearly identified and provided for
- There were sufficient activities and good time out of cell. Education provided a broad curriculum, and some women could work outside the prison, but there was not enough accreditation of skills
- Resettlement work was sound, with a range of programmes and drugs services, but required an up-to-date needs analysis and planning for those with short sentences.
- Some very good work with families was being developed, in partnership with Action for Prisoners' Families

Anne Owers said:

“Overall, this is a record of solid performance across all the key areas of prison life. This should provide a good platform for further

improvement to ensure that Downview is able to build on its strengths and provide the best possible environment for the women it holds.”

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

“This is a good report, which rightly recognises the good work taking place at Downview to create a safe and positive environment. Staff engage effectively with the women to reduce their risk to society and I am confident that the management team will continue to build on this success.”

Notes for Editors

1. A copy of the full report can be found on the HM Inspectorate of Prisons website from 4 November 2008 at <http://inspectrates.justice.gov.uk/hmiprisons>
2. The announced inspection of HMP Brixton was carried out from 12-16 May 2008. The last full inspection took place from 9 -13 June 2003.
3. The operational capacity at HMP/YOI Downview is 358.
4. Downview is a closed prison for women in Sutton in Surrey, converted from a former nurses' home. The prison opened in 1989 as a category C Male Prison. In September 2001 Downview re-roled to a closed prison for adult women and in December 2004 a 16 bed juvenile unit (The Josephine Butler Unit) opened for young female offenders (both remand and convicted) aged from 15-18 in partnership with the Youth Justice Board.
5. Anne Owers, Chief Inspector of Prisons, is available for interview. If you would like to speak to her, please contact Yasser Mehmood in the Press Office on 0203 334 3538.