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HMP FOREST BANK – PROGRESS, BUT WEAKNESSES

HMP Forest Bank had improved, particularly in resettlement work, but weaknesses in healthcare and safety needed addressing, said the Chief Inspector of Prisons, Anne Owers, releasing the report of a full inspection of the local prison in Salford.

Forest Bank is a privately-managed prison run by Kalyx, and this is its third inspection.

Inspectors found

- Safety had improved since the last inspection, but first night and anti-bullying arrangements were weak. The availability of drugs remained a serious concern, and the prison's drug testing arrangements were masking this. Half the prisoners surveyed said that it was easy to get hold of drugs. Drug detoxification was also inadequate.
- Staff-prisoner relationships were good, though staff were inexperienced. The environment was good, and race relations were well-managed.
- Healthcare was unacceptably poor, with staff shortages and some unsafe practices.
- Efforts had been made to link work and training to realistic employment possibilities, and the quality of work and education was good. Though time out of cell was good for a local prison, 40% of prisoners were unemployed and this needed to be reduced.
- Resettlement was good, with some innovative local partnerships, including one that provided jobs and accommodation for prisoners who had achieved construction qualifications. There was a focus on reducing reoffending, and offender management had started well.

Anne Owers said:

“Forest Bank has made commendable and imaginative progress in resettlement, largely on its own initiative, and has developed a relevant range of education, work and training. These are considerable strengths in a local prison, focusing on reducing reoffending.

“However, there were also some weaknesses. There were not enough activities for its expanded population. The availability of drugs remained of concern, and it will be important to gain an accurate picture of the scale of the problem in order to continue

to tackle both supply and demand effectively. Violence reduction strategies and the support for vulnerable prisoners also needed improvement. The other major weakness was healthcare, and urgent action is needed to raise the service to an acceptable standard.

"Kalyx and the prison's managers will need to ensure that these fundamental issues are addressed as firmly and positively as the resettlement agenda has been."

Deputy Regional Offender Manager, Marie Mclaughlin said:

"I am grateful to the Chief Inspector for this balanced and helpful report. The prison is to be commended for its achievements on resettlement, educating prisoners and providing meaningful activity. The ultimate aim of this work is to protect the public by reducing the factors, which we know cause reoffending.

"The report highlights a number of areas where the prison must improve, and action is being taken to address these. A new Healthcare Manager has been appointed to tackle the issues raised by the Inspectorate. The prison has commissioned UCLAN (University of Central Lancashire) to undertake a bullying survey."

Notes to Editors

1. A full copy of the HMCIP report into HMP Forest Bank is available from <http://inspectrates.justice.gov.uk/hmiprisons/>
2. The unannounced inspection took place between 10–14 September 2007
3. To request an interview, please call 0207 210 1473.