

HMP BRINSFORD - SERIOUS SHORTCOMINGS

Brinsford Young Offenders Institution was struggling to provide appropriate levels of safety and decency, according to HM Chief Inspector of Prisons Anne Owers following the report of an announced inspection.

Brinsford is a 'split site', holding both juveniles and young adults. Benefiting from more resources, the juveniles at Brinsford were better supported, and felt safer than the young adults.

However, inspectors found:

- High levels of use of force, unauthorised punishments, and relatively high numbers of allegations by young people of abuse, both from staff and other prisoners.
- Ineffective anti-bullying and vulnerability strategies, even though 43% of young adults said they had felt unsafe at some time.
- Poor levels of cleanliness, and some double cells with unscreened toilets were unfit for purpose.
- Insufficient workshop and training spaces: young prisoners, and particularly young adults, spent too long in their cells.
- Mixed staff-prisoner relations: good on some specialist units but generally distant and mutually suspicious.

Brinsford did have some strengths. First night and induction arrangements were generally sound. Education was satisfactory. Resettlement work was good: most of those leaving had accommodation to go to and many were assisted with employment. Sentence planning and drug treatment were also well-developed.

Anne Owers said:

"Brinsford faces immense challenges. It is split awkwardly into separate juvenile and young adults facilities, neither built with sufficient activities to occupy the young people held there. It holds a challenging and needy population.

"However, it was struggling to provide appropriate levels of safety, respect and even basic cleanliness. The Governor and Area Manager need to review and address the challenges that Brinsford faces. There

is much to do to create the positive and stable environment that the young people there need."

Phil Wheatley, Director General of the Prison Service said:

"I am pleased that the Chief Inspector noted the quality of resettlement work, the sound delivery of education and the standard of drug treatment at Brinsford.

"But I am fully aware that improvements are required in some areas, and the Governor and staff have embarked on a concerted programme to consolidate and improve all aspects of prison performance over a three-year period. In the short term this includes relaunching the anti-bullying strategy, increasing maintenance provision and drawing up a full review of work, education and training."

Notes to editors

1. The announced inspection of HM YOI & RC Brinsford took place on 14 - 18 February 2005.
2. HMP Brinsford in the West Midlands is a young offender institution and remand centre for juveniles and young adults up to age 21.
3. Inspectorate reports and releases are available at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/justice/prisons/inspprisons> .
4. For an electronic copy of the report, please call 020 7035 4381.