

Staff at HMP Garth are to be congratulated for achieving a safe, mutually respectful and purposeful environment for a challenging population, said Anne Owers, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons today publishing an announced inspection report on the prison, which houses over 600 serious offenders.

Anne Owers said:

“Garth was found to be an impressively safe and secure establishment. Reception and first night procedures were managed effectively to ensure that prisoners were received with appropriate attention to their needs. Although policies on suicide, self-harm and anti-bullying were new, they clearly built upon good existing practice.

“Garth was also a commendably respectful environment. Staff treated their often difficult and challenging charges with the right balance of care, respect and professional distance.”

The report also praises the incentives scheme, the segregation unit, the chaplaincy and the race relations policy and practice. Healthcare was improving and there were extensive drugs services, including a therapeutic community for those with a history of drug abuse.

There were areas that needed improvement. Too many cells designed for one were housing two prisoners, sometimes with inadequate screening of the shared toilet. There needed to be more purposeful activity, with a greater focus on accredited training. Resettlement and work with life sentenced prisoners required further development. And there was inadequate recognition of the needs of foreign nationals, though work was starting.

Anne Owers concluded:

“Overall this is a good inspection report on a safe, respectful and still improving prison which has to manage some very serious and long-term prisoners. The staff deserve congratulation for what has so far been achieved and encouragement to continue to expand and develop those areas still requiring improvement.”

Commenting on the report, Peter Atherton, Deputy Director General of the Prison Service said:

"I am very pleased that the Chief Inspector commended Garth for so many aspects of its regime, and the governor and staff deserve great credit for their achievements in delivering a successful prison.

"However I know they are not complacent and I am confident that the prison is already driving hard towards achieving the remaining recommendations identified by the inspection team."

Notes to editors:

1. The full announced inspection of HMP Garth was carried out between 2 and 6 February 2004.
2. HMP Garth is a training prison near Preston, Lancashire, for sentenced category B adult male prisoners, including life-sentenced prisoners.
3. Prison Inspectorate reports and press releases are available from <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/justice/prisons/inspprisons>