

HMP KIRKHAM - AN IMPROVING PRISON

HMP Kirkham, which is one of the prisons piloting the new intermittent custody sentence, has improved and can progress still further, said HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, Anne Owers, publishing a report of an announced inspection of the prison today.

Inspectors examined the intermittent custody pilot (where prisoners spend either weekdays or weekends in custody). They found that it had potential, but that the weekday scheme had been virtually inoperative, and activities did not meet prisoners' needs.

The report found that Kirkham now had a clear resettlement focus and was addressing the challenges faced by all open prisons, as they deal with more challenging prisoners. There was good quality education, but activities needed to be geared more towards the needs of prisoners and their employability.

Anne Owers said:

"Overall, Kirkham was an improving establishment: showing signs of a renewed sense of purpose. The governor and staff now need to bed in and implement recent and proposed changes. And the barriers to full and effective use of the intermittent custody scheme need to be tackled."

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

"I am very pleased that this report recognises the significant progress that has been made at Kirkham and identifies the improvements made in the establishment's resettlement policy.

"Since January 2004, a total of 175 male offenders have been sentenced to intermittent custody, and the level of compliance has been exceptionally high. The figures for weekday custody have been disappointing, but with the recent and forthcoming increases in the number of courts involved in the intermittent custody pilots we believe the use of weekday orders will grow."

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. The announced inspection of HMP Kirkham took place on 5 - 10 December 2004.
2. HMP Kirkham is a category D male training prison.

3. HM Prisons 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 7 035 4381.
5. Anne Owers is available for interview. To request an interview please telephone 020 7035 3853.