

HMP Leyhill has adapted well to the challenges facing open prisons, and provides a safe environment for staff and prisoners, said Anne Owers, Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing her report of an unannounced inspection of the open prison in Gloucestershire.

The inspection found that Leyhill was coping with growing numbers and a higher proportion of short-term and less compliant prisoners. Inspectors said that the prison was rising to these challenges and had addressed almost all the recommendations made in the previous inspection report.

The report found that:

- Leyhill had a commendably safe environment, with good procedures for reception, suicide and self-harm;
- Relationships between staff and prisoners were relaxed and mutually respectful;
- Accommodation was of good quality;
- The complaints system worked well;
- Healthcare was much improved.

However, the report also noted some concerns:

- Staff needed to be better trained to identify and deal with potential bullies, given the changed nature of the population;
- More work was needed to combat the supply of and demand for drugs;
- The needs of the growing number of foreign national prisoners required greater attention;
- There should be a resettlement strategy for short-term prisoners.

Anne Owers said:

"Overall, Leyhill was found to be a healthy prison. It was ably supporting the training and resettlement of long term prisoners but also beginning to adapt to the needs and challenges posed by other types of prisoner less obviously suitable for a traditional open prison. Other open prisons would do well to learn from Leyhill's evidently effective and flexible approach."

Phil Wheatley, Director General of the Prison Service, said:

"I am very pleased that the Chief Inspector has recognised that Leyhill is a very healthy prison, which has made considerable progress since its last inspection. The prison is continuing to cater for the training and resettlement needs of prisoners whilst also adapting to a population that reflects wider changes in the national prison population.

The Governor and staff are taking determined action to tackle the increased problems of bullying and drug abuse produced by the changes in population and to further develop the resettlement work of the prison.

I am confident that Leyhill will continue to operate successfully and remain a safe and effective prison."

Notes to editors:

1. The unannounced inspection of HMP Leyhill took place on 6-8 July 2004.
2. HMP Leyhill is an open Category D training establishment for adult males. The last inspection took place in September 2001.
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 7273 4545.