

HMP Manchester is a more stable and much more purposeful prison than it was three years ago, but close management is needed to maintain that in the face of population pressures, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons Anne Owers said today.

Publishing the report of a full unannounced inspection into conditions at the large inner-city local prison, Anne Owers commended the significant improvements in education, resettlement and work opportunities.

Anne Owers said:

"Manchester offered more, and better quality, purposeful activity and resettlement work than almost any other local prison we have inspected: indeed, better than many training prisons.

"Resettlement was delivered through admirable partnership arrangements: with a number of agencies offering housing, employment and advice services within the prison; and strong links with statutory agencies to support prisoners on release."

There were however some areas of concern:

- There were some key weaknesses in safer custody procedures, particularly anti-bullying, which was not being tackled systematically; staff needed to engage more positively with prisoners who were out of their cells more;
- The balance between security and care, in relation to low-risk prisoners was not always properly struck; rules were sometimes applied inconsistently or inflexibly;
- Healthcare had deteriorated since the last inspection, to levels that were in some cases unacceptable. Mental health support was of particular concern;
- Black and minority ethnic prisoners reported lower levels of safety and higher levels of victimisation by fellow prisoners than white prisoners.

In conclusion, Anne Owers said:

"Manchester is a prison that has shown considerable improvement since the last inspection. It has settled down and is providing

levels of activity and resettlement work that other local prisons would do well to match. However, like all local prisons, it operates under considerable pressure, and some of its large wings, with the most transient populations, will continue to need close management to ensure stability and safety."

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

"I am pleased the Chief Inspector recognises both the achievements of Manchester Prison and the very real pressures that local prisons work under. I agree it is a much improved establishment that continues to progress. The particular praise for education and resettlement are testament to the good work which can be done even in a local prison. The area where improvement is needed will be a key focus for the governor and his staff."

Notes to editors:

1. The [full unannounced inspection of HM Prison Manchester](#) was carried out between 5-9 July 2004.
2. Inspectorate reports and releases are available at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/justice/prisons/inspprisons>.
3. For an electronic copy of the report, please call 020 7273 4545.

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