

In a report published today, Anne Owers, Chief Inspector of Prisons, commends Shrewsbury for its progress, in spite of being the most overcrowded prison in the country, but points to some weaknesses that need urgent attention: particularly in supporting prisoners withdrawing from drugs.

Shrewsbury had excellent staff-prisoner relationships, and had made improvements, despite being the most overcrowded prison in an overcrowded prison system:

- The great majority of previous recommendations had been achieved;
- Healthcare had improved considerably;
- There were good anti-bullying procedures;
- Education and activities had progressed, though lack of space and fast prisoner throughput made it impossible to meet prisoners' needs;
- There was active resettlement work, but only 48 of 268 prisoners recently discharged had work to go to.

However, the report also highlighted some weaknesses that needed urgent attention:

- Detoxification procedures remained defective although the great majority of prisoners had used heroin prior to imprisonment;
- Better analysis of patterns of suicide and self-harm, and the links with drug abuse, was needed in a prison that had experienced three self-inflicted deaths in the year before the inspection (and has since had three more);
- Procedures for medical examination and the location of prisoners in the segregation unit were inadequate;
- Prisoners spent too much time in their cells, without daily access to showers and telephones.

Anne Owers said:

"It is very pleasing that staff-prisoner relationships at Shrewsbury have continued to be excellent, and that the prison is continually seeking to improve. However, Shrewsbury is a small but acute example of what overcrowded prisons face at

present, as they try to keep prisoners safe and provide them with the skills they need on release."

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

"I am pleased that the Inspectorate recognise the achievements that Shrewsbury have made since the last inspection. They are operating under the considerable population pressures faced by all local prisons and yet have managed to meet most of the previous recommendations. I am confident that the prison can continue to make improvements in line with the recommendations."

Notes to editors:

1. The unannounced inspection of HMP Shrewsbury took place on 9-11 August 2004.
 2. HMP Shrewsbury is a category B prison for adult male prisoners.
 3. Inspectorate reports and releases are available at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/justice/prisons/inspprison>
[S](#).
 4. For an electronic copy of the report, please call 020 7273 4545.
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