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HMP KENNET – A GOOD START

HMP Kennet, the newest English prison, had been opened quickly and effectively and was a safe and respectful establishment, though it lacked activity spaces, said Dame Anne Owers, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing the first inspection report on the male training prison in Merseyside.

Inspectors found

- Reception, first night and induction procedures were sound, as were violence reduction and safer custody arrangements. Some security restrictions were disproportionate, and there was a need for rapid progress to introduce the integrated drug treatment system.
- Relations between staff and prisoners were good, with a developing personal officer scheme, but diversity was under-developed and black and minority ethnic prisoners had negative perceptions about the prison.
- The lack of primary mental health care was surprising for a prison only recently converted from part of a secure mental hospital.
- The lack of activity spaces meant that Kennet would struggle to become an adequate training prison. Learning and skills provision was good, but there were few vocational training courses and only basic PE.
- Resettlement and offender management were under-developed and needed better strategic direction. There were good drug treatment services and some reintegration support, but no offending behaviour programmes.

Anne Owers said:

“Opening a new prison is always a huge challenge. New systems and procedures need to be established and both staff and prisoners need time to understand each other and adjust to their new setting. The risk of teething problems is significant, not least when the physical fabric is weak, as at Kennet.

“Managers and staff are, therefore, to be congratulated for opening the accommodation so quickly, safely and effectively. It shows how much can be achieved in a small prison, with good staff-prisoner interaction. It would therefore be a pity if the National Offender Management Service was not to identify, and invest in, a sustainable future for Kennet.”

Phil Wheatley, Director General of the National Offender Management Service, said:

“The Governor and staff are to be congratulated for their success in establishing and maintaining Kennet as a safe and effective prison.

“This is an excellent foundation on which to build, and I am confident that Kennet will continue to develop as new activity places are introduced in a range of areas providing prisoners with valuable skills.”

Notes for Editors

1. A copy of the full report can be found on the HM Inspectorate of Prisons website from 15 April 2009 at <http://inspectrates.justice.gov.uk/hmiprisons>.
2. The announced inspection of HMP Kennet was carried out from 1-5 Sept 2008.
3. The operational capacity at HMP Kennet at the time of the inspection was 337.
4. HMP Kennet is a category C resettlement prison. In late December 2006, the National Offender Management Service acquired Ashworth East Hospital from Merseyside Care Trust on a five-year lease to help combat overcrowding in prisons in England and Wales.
5. Nigel Newcomen, Deputy Chief Inspector, is available for interview. If you would like to speak to her please contact Nicole Valentinuzzi in the Press Office on 0203 334 3547.