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### **LEEDS: FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS REMAIN**

There were still fundamental problems at Leeds prison, in spite of vigorous management attempts to tackle them, said Anne Owers, Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing the report of an unannounced inspection of the local prison.

Leeds was still failing to perform sufficiently well in any of the inspectorate's key tests, though there had been progress in all areas, as managers tried to put in place building blocks for solid and sustained improvement.

#### Inspectors found

- There had been some improvements in supporting prisoners at risk, particularly those withdrawing from drugs and new to the prison. However, this had not percolated to staff on the wings, where support for such prisoners was inconsistent and emergency call bells not always answered.
- 44% of prisoners said they had felt unsafe at Leeds. Anti-bullying procedures were underdeveloped and drug use was high.
- Relationships between staff and prisoners in general were distant and negative and complaints against staff were not rigorously investigated. Black and minority ethnic, and particularly Muslim, prisoners were more negative than others. However, in all areas inspectors found extremely committed individual staff members, whose work was not yet supported by all colleagues.
- Activity levels were poor, with around a third of prisoners unemployed and spending over 22 hours a day locked in their cells. The prison's reported figures for time out of cell, an average of 9 hours a day, were 'simply fictional'. However, some education and PE were of good quality.
- Resettlement had improved, with the involvement of community groups and employers. Inspectors particularly commended the visitors' centre run by Jigsaw. However, too many prisoners, particularly those serving

indeterminate sentences, stayed too long at Leeds without being able to engage in positive work or programmes.

Anne Owers said:

“This inspection showed that there were still fundamental problems that needed to be addressed at Leeds. We did, however, find a management team that was committed to working methodically and vigorously to tackle the underlying causes as well as the symptoms. This is no easy task, in a prison system that is creaking at the seams and facing considerable challenges over the next few months. They, and the many good and committed staff in the prison, will need considerable support.”

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

“Leeds prison continues to make progress under its committed management team, and I agree with the Chief Inspector that there are a number of significant issues to be addressed. I am confident that managers will continue to work extremely hard and build on improvements made so far to secure the further improvement in staff performance that is required.

“Progress has already been seen in a number of key areas including safety, where anti-bullying procedures have been reviewed and substantively improved.”

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

1. A full copy of the HMCIP report into HMP Leeds is available from <http://inspectrates.justice.gov.uk/hmiprisons/>
2. HMP Leeds is a category B local prison. It takes until trial all adult male prisoners remanded from the West Yorkshire area and convicted prisoners for short periods following sentencing.
3. At the time of the inspection it had an operational capacity of 1,000.
4. The announced inspection took place on 5 – 14 December 2007.
5. Anne Owers is available for media interviews. Please call 0207 210 8029 to arrange an interview.