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020 3334 3530

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HMP LEICESTER – SOME IMPROVEMENT, BUT MORE NEEDED

HMP Leicester had begun to improve, but a great deal of further progress was needed, said Anne Owers, Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing the report of an announced inspection of the prison.

Leicester is a small, overcrowded, inner-city local prison, with old and inadequate buildings.

Inspectors found:

- In spite of a poor environment in reception and the first night centre, prisoners had good quality care and reported positively on their early experiences.
- Efforts had been made to improve violence reduction and safer custody procedures, but these areas still needed a great deal of development.
- Much of the accommodation was in a poor state of repair, and some single cells were unsuitable for double occupancy
- Staff-prisoner relationships were reasonable, but the personal officer and incentives schemes were not effective. It was disappointing, in a city with one of the most diverse populations in the country, that diversity work was underdeveloped
- Security was good, as were measures to reduce the supply of drugs into the prison and detoxification arrangements were sound.
- There was insufficient activity; inspectors found nearly half the prisoners locked in their cells. This was disguised by grossly inadequate recording. The quality of education was poor.
- Resettlement strategy needed improvement, but there were good practical reintegration services.

Anne Owers, Chief Inspector of Prisons said:

“In common with many ageing city-centre local prisons, Leicester has to address a wide range of needs presented by a transient population in an inadequate and overcrowded environment. This inspection found that some badly needed improvements were beginning to be made, particularly to address our previous concerns about safety and to provide some practical help with resettlement. However, even allowing for the obvious physical constraints, the new governor is fully aware that a great deal of further progress is required.”

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

“I am pleased that the Chief Inspector has reported positively about the prison’s work in security, safety, and resettlement. It is encouraging that prisoners generally feel safe at the prison, and I am particularly pleased about the praise for the work on reducing drug supply and detoxification

“A fundamental review of the regime is under way to address issues around purposeful activity and time spent out of cell, including how this is reported. Diversity events and an immigration forum have been introduced to meet the requirements of the BME and Foreign National population.

“Despite the inadequate accommodation the Governor and staff have made progress, but there is clearly more to do and work will continue to further improve the prison.”

Notes to Editors

1. A copy of the full report can be found on the HM Inspectorate of Prisons website from 19 December 2008 at <http://inspectrates.justice.gov.uk/hmiprisons>
2. The announced inspection of HMP Leicester was carried out from 2-6 June 2008.
3. The operational capacity at HMP Leicester is 392. The number of prisoners held at the time of the inspection was 346.
4. The last full inspection of HMP Leicester took place from 7-11 July 2003.
5. Anne Owers, Chief Inspector of Prisons, is available for interview. If you would like to speak to her please contact Andrew Winstone in the Press Office on 020 3334 3530.