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HMYOI NORTHALLERTON – NO CLEAR ROLE AND LITTLE PROGRESS

HMYOI Northallerton had not made any significant progress since its last inspection, and its resettlement work had not kept pace with national practice, said Dame Anne Owers, Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing the report of a short unannounced follow-up inspection of the young offender institution in Yorkshire.

Northallerton is a small establishment, holding young adult men, usually serving short sentences or close to release. Previous inspection reports have identified the difficulty it has had in providing effectively for this population, and have expressed the hope that it would acquire the focus and resources to do so. This inspection, disappointingly, found that this had not happened.

Inspectors found:

- Northallerton was reasonably safe, but there were some deficiencies in the procedures and processes to support this. Staff engagement in violence reduction work was often superficial, and support for those at risk of self-harm sometimes inadequate.
- The physical environment was far from ideal: too many cells and communal areas were dirty or poorly furnished.
- Relationships with staff were reasonable, but largely superficial, and the personal officer scheme was ineffective.
- The quality of education and training had improved since the last inspection, but there was far too little of it, and 40% of young men were locked in their cells during the core day.
- Offender management had been introduced since the last inspection, but the establishment had been slow to meet the needs of the majority of its population, who were not covered by the scheme. There were delays in assessments, and poor quality sentence planning. Accommodation services were good, and pre-release work had made some progress.

Anne Owers said:

“Northallerton is, in many ways, a victim of poor planning and under-resourcing for young adult men in the prison system. It is far from clear what role it is expected to fulfil in the short time most of its prisoners spend there. One option would be for it to focus on, and significantly strengthen, its role as a resettlement prison for young men from the north east. This is an age group that is at high risk of reoffending and needs considerable support both before

and after release. However, at present, many will simply be marking time at Northallerton.”

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

“Northallerton is a small prison catering for a high turnover young prisoner population, held in traditional Victorian cell block design which limits what can be achieved. I am pleased that the Inspectorate has recognised the improvements to education and training. I am confident that the Governor and his staff will work together to deliver further improvements.”

Notes for Editors

1. The full report can be found on the HM Inspectorate of Prisons website from 13 May 2009 at <http://inspectors.justice.gov.uk/hmiprison>s
2. The short unannounced follow-up inspection of HMYOI Northallerton was carried out 18–20 November 2008.
3. The operational capacity at HMYOI Northallerton at the time of the inspection was 252.
4. The last inspection of HMYOI Northallerton took place from 17-23 October 2005.
5. HMYOI Northallerton holds male young offenders serving a sentence of two years and under from establishments within Yorkshire and Humberside, and those serving a sentence of 18 months or less from establishments outside the area. In addition, the establishment also accepts offenders serving up to four years who are within three months of their release date.
6. Anne Owers, Chief Inspector, is available for interview. If you would like to speak to her please contact Andrew Winstone in the Press Office on 0203 334 3530.