

NORWICH - SERIOUS CONCERN FOR CONDITIONS IN THE ADULT PRISON, BUT GOOD WORK WITH YOUNG OFFENDERS

Norwich is a prison which is working well with young offenders, but work in all other areas is a cause for significant concern, said Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons Anne Owers, publishing her inspection report today.

The report of the unannounced follow-up inspection found that the adult prison was falling some way short of what it should have been providing and what was expected.

Anne Owers said:

"First night, induction and anti-bullying procedures were inadequate to ensure prisoners' safety, and there needed to be a more proactive approach to analysing and implementing self-harm procedures. There was a comprehensive anti-bullying policy in place, but there was little evidence of staff using it and some managers were concerned that some staff were actively resisting implementing the system. The drugs strategy was also ineffective, largely due to the prison's failure to support it with the staff it needed.

"We found poor standards of cleanliness and poor staff-prisoner relationships in the adult prison. Some cells were dirty and there was a proliferation of graffiti on some wings and in the segregation unit, and with the exception of staff in the resettlement wing, there was relatively little engagement or involvement with the prisoners."

The report also found that the healthcare centre continued to need significant improvement, and that the prison was failing to deal effectively with its vulnerable prisoner population, many of whom were sex offenders.

Access to education and work was found to be very limited. During the inspection over 200 of the 250 prisoners on one main wing had no access to meaningful work or education. On the prison's 'training' wing, only eight out of 45 prisoners on one landing were in education and none were undertaking meaningful work. One in five of those education places that did exist were not filled. There was also a consistent failure to fill the insufficient number of workshop places that were available. While there had been improvements, to some extent, this situation has affected the morale of an otherwise enthusiastic and hard working staff in the education department.

By contrast, the report found that staff working with young adults, and on the small resettlement wing, were caring and conditions decent.

Anne Owers said:

"Conditions in the young offender institution showed us what the prison staff could do. They were held in generally safe conditions as a result of the close supervision, interest and care of the staff working with them. The monitoring and support unit was well managed and young prisoners there were treated with respect and care.

"There were also some pockets of good practice in resettlement, including an excellent resettlement unit for 40 prisoners. Other good work was all carried out by

and through external agencies, however, the prison as a whole had no resettlement strategy that reflected the needs of its varied and often short-term population."

The key recommendations in the report included:

- * Effective first night arrangements should be in place
- * There should be a comprehensive induction programme for all new prisoners
- * An anti-bullying strategy should be implemented based on a prisoner survey
- * Standards of cleanliness in the adult prison should be dramatically improved
- * There should be an effective personal officer scheme in the adult prison that encourages positive and caring staff-prisoner relationships
- * All prisoners should be purposefully occupied during the day and the existing places in education should be consistently filled
- * There should be a resettlement strategy and services which reflect and meet the needs of prisoners held at Norwich
- * There should be a comprehensive strategy for the management of vulnerable prisoners
- * There should be a drugs strategy which impacts on the whole population of the prison

In conclusion Anne Owers said:

"Norwich prison is clearly capable of carrying out good work, as the relationships in the young adult wing, and the work of the resettlement unit, show. There are plans for further development, which we welcome. However, overall, this is a picture of a prison that needs urgently to energise its staff and its management, if it is to produce acceptable outcomes for prisoners and reduce the chance of them reoffending."

Commenting on the report, Deputy Director General of the Prison Service, Phil Wheatley, said:

"Norwich is a multi-functional prison which has been operating close to its capacity due to the rise in the prison population. This has increased the pressure of the prison and has affected its performance, particularly in the adult part of the prison, which has experienced the most throughput of prisoners.

"Despite these pressures 784 prisoners have obtained qualifications or accredited courses at Norwich during the past 12 months including 358 prisoners who have achieved Basic Skills qualifications in literacy and numeracy and 103 prisoners who have completed based offending behaviour programmes. This is a considerable achievement which merits recognition alongside the high quality work undertaken with Young Offenders and in the Resettlement Unit.

"We are addressing the concerns raised by the Chief Inspector and improvements are being made. A comprehensive Prison Service audit at the prison during November demonstrated much improved compliance in standards of safety and anti bullying, drug strategy and suicide and self-harm prevention."

NOTE TO EDITORS:

1. The unannounced follow-up inspection of HMP Norwich was carried out between 17 and 19 September 2002.

2. HMP Norwich is a local, male training prison, with a resettlement unit, young offender institution and male remand centre.

3. HM Prison Inspectorate reports are available at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmipris/hmipris.htm>