

HM YOI/RC ONLEY – IMPROVEMENTS IN EDUCATION, SAFETY AND RESETTLEMENT NEEDED

The report on a full, announced inspection of HM YOI/RC Onley was published today by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons. Both in this report, and the report on HMP/YOI Hindley, also published today, the Chief Inspector points to the deficits in the regimes available for 18-20 year olds and the urgent need for additional resources to allow establishments to improve education, training and purposeful activity for this important group of prisoners.

Anne Owers, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons, said:

“Onley is a complex establishment, dealing with some of the most difficult and damaged young people in custody. We do not underestimate the difficulties this poses for staff and young prisoners.”

The report points to:

- Unacceptable deficits in education and training which became progressively worse for over-18s and unsentenced prisoners. Unsentenced children were locked up for 20 hours a day. Education targets were set too high for 70% of the prison population;
- The need for positive, proactive relationships between staff and young people at Onley, and an effective anti-bullying strategy. Without this, there were consequences for the safety of the young people, and the respect with which they were treated. It also significantly reduced prison officers' job satisfaction and morale;
- Shortfalls in sentence planning and resettlement work for over-18s. There was no integration of residential, education and training staff in sentence planning work, no offending behaviour programmes and no clear resettlement policy or up-to-date assessment of resettlement needs. There were pockets of good work, but significant gaps: for example, no staff were designated to deal with housing needs;

However, the Inspectorate were pleased to note examples of good practice, in particular some very positive and proactive healthcare and drugs work, and the provision of information notices by reception staff in user friendly picture format. These were examples of how, in spite of difficulties, good staff and managers were using their initiative to try to provide a constructive and positive environment.

Concluding, Anne Owers said:

“Education provision for under-18s did not meet Youth Justice Board standards, though we understand that steps are being taken to improve this.

“There should be a similar level of provision for the over-18 estate, which has not had the same injection of resources and high targets for purposeful activity.

“These are issues that cannot be addressed by one establishment on its own. Without adequate support, training and resources, it will not be possible to meet the challenge of dealing effectively with large numbers of very difficult young people who have failed, and been failed, many times in the past.”

The Director General of the Prison Service, Martin Narey, said:

“At the time of this inspection, almost a year ago, there were acknowledged deficiencies in education, training and employment opportunities at Onley.

“I announced last year that Onley would be one of five young offenders institutions to receiving a share of £5million a year for a three year period specifically to improve regimes. Those resources have been made available and steady improvements have been made.

“Under the leadership of Sue McAllister and her team I am sure that the improvements that are already underway will continue and accelerate.”

NOTES FOR EDITORS:

1. The inspection of HM YOI/RC Onley was carried out between 9 and 13 July 2001.
2. HM Prison Inspectorate reports and releases are available at www.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmipris/hmipris.htm