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HMP PARKHURST: A FAILING PRISON

HMP Parkhurst had slipped back from an already low base, and lacked basic levels of safety and decency, said Dame Anne Owers, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing the report of an unannounced full follow-up inspection into the Isle of Wight training prison.

Inspectors found:

- Bullying and violence appeared endemic. A startling 75% of vulnerable prisoners reported feeling unsafe. The quality of violence reduction and anti-bullying arrangements was poor, as was supervision on the wings..
- The segregation unit was dour, oppressive and over-large. Prisoners were held in solitary confinement for lengthy periods
- Staff-prisoner relationships were distant and there was no meaningful personal officer scheme.
- Work on diversity was in its infancy and inspectors were appalled by the treatment of the small number of prisoners with disabilities, some of whom had gone without a shower for many months.
- Health services were unacceptably weak.
- Prison staff needed better training and national strategic support to deal with radical Muslim prisoners in an appropriate and balanced manner.
- The prison struggled to offer the sort of work, learning and skills provision expected of a training prison. There was too little worthwhile employment and a limited range of education.
- Indeterminate-sentenced prisoners felt frustrated by their inability to progress, and offender supervision was poor.

Anne Owers said:

“In many ways, Parkhurst is a failing prison: prisoners feel unsafe and poorly treated, and neither the environment nor the regime are suited to the role of a modern training prison. Matters are compounded by a demanding population, many of whom resent being housed in what

they view as an isolated establishment with little to offer them. Exceptionally poor industrial relations also exert a malign influence over an already troubled institution.

“Parkhurst badly needs regional and national support to ensure the restoration of basic levels of safety and decency, together with investment to increase purposeful activity.

“It is to be hoped that the new Isle of Wight cluster arrangements will offer the opportunity to take stock, reconfigure Parkhurst’s role, and expedite work to address its substantial shortcomings.”

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

“I accept the Chief Inspector’s analysis of a prison that has fallen below an acceptable standard. Parkhurst now forms part of HMP Isle of Wight, whose Governor has embarked from 1st May this year on a radical programme of change with the help of a new senior management team. I am determined that the creation of the new prison and the associated restructuring will deliver the changes required.

“I also agree that very poor industrial relations have hampered Parkhurst over the years and this cannot continue if Parkhurst, now part of HMP Isle of Wight, is to progress. Staff of all grades will have to work co-operatively and flexibly if the prison is to move forward.”

Notes for Editors

1. The full report can be found on the HM Inspectorate of Prisons website from 20 May 2009 at <http://inspectors.justice.gov.uk/hmiprisons>.
2. The announced inspection of the HMP Parkhurst was carried out 8–12 December 2008.
3. The operational capacity at HMP Parkhurst at the time of the inspection was 507.
4. The last inspection of HMP Parkhurst took place from 4–8 July 2006.
5. HMP Parkhurst is a category B training prison for adult male prisoners, and also holds a small number of unconvicted adult male prisoners awaiting trial at courts on the Isle of Wight.
6. Anne Owers, Chief Inspector, is available for interview. If you would like to speak to her please contact Tom Hodson in the Press Office on 0203 334 3527.