

## HM PRISON SHREWSBURY – A GOOD COMMUNITY PRISON

HM Prison Shrewsbury has the makings of a good community prison, mainly due to excellent staff-prisoner relationships that are among the best of any prison inspected, says Anne Owers, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons, in a positive report published today.

The report follows a full, announced inspection of HMP Shrewsbury in November 2001.

Anne Owers said:

“From the Governor down, staff were visible and approachable. Four out of five prisoners surveyed said that relationships with staff were good or very good, and this was borne out by the Inspectorate's observations. Similarly, four out of five prisoners had never or rarely felt unsafe, and nearly half said that they would be able to tell staff about bullying. The prison was managed as a unit, with the active involvement of middle managers and all staff felt engaged in providing a good service.

“Yet there were no signs of complacency. The Governor and staff were seeking improvements in self-harm reduction, resettlement work, education and training and healthcare; and welcomed our suggestions. In particular, they were trying to establish better links with probation and other community services in Stoke-on-Trent, the area from which most prisoners came.”

However, the Inspectors found that the risk of self-harm in the early days of imprisonment, linked to inadequate detoxification, was one area which urgently needed addressing. 60% of those at risk of self harm were detoxifying and the majority of self-harm incidents took place within the first few weeks at the prison. Healthcare in general needed urgent improvement. The prison was aware of this dangerous gap and already taking steps to deal with it.

Anne Owers said:

“In many ways, Shrewsbury fits Lord Woolf's model of a community prison: a small, cohesive establishment, mainly serving a specific locality.

“It will always, however, be constrained by its physical environment and size, which make it difficult, if not impossible, to provide sufficient training, work and recreational facilities.

”We suggest that Shrewsbury should build on its strengths – its positive staff-prisoner relationships and its developing local links – and focus on the tasks of reception and resettlement for those from the area.

“But since we inspected, the unprecedented rise in prisoner numbers, and the need to move them randomly across the country, makes this seem like an impossible dream. The fact that it is less attainable than when we inspected only serves to underline the damage that the present crisis in prison overcrowding is likely to do to the prospect of successful resettlement.”

Commenting on the report, Martin Narey, Director General of the Prison Service said:

"I am delighted that the Chief Inspector has recognised the positive and effective regime that has been created and maintained by the Governor and his staff at HMP Shrewsbury. Despite the near overwhelming population pressures, Shrewsbury is performing well and doing as much as possible to prepare prisoners for release.

“Governor Michael Bolton can rightly be proud of an establishment that continues to strive for positive change and provides a safe and decent environment for both staff and prisoners.”

#### **NOTE FOR EDITORS**

1. The full announced inspection of HMP Shrewsbury was carried out from 5 to 9 November 2001.
2. HMP Shrewsbury is a Category B local prison for adult males and therefore houses unconvicted and convicted men, mainly from the areas served by Crown Courts at Shrewsbury and Stoke-on-Trent. The proportion of convicted to remanded prisoners was in the ratio 80:20.
3. Prison Inspectorate reports and press releases are available at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmipris/hmipris.htm>
4. For an electronic copy of the report, please email [mark.pillans@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:mark.pillans@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk).