

STOCKEN – AN EXAMPLE TO OTHER PRISONS

Stocken should be commended as an example to other prisons, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons, Anne Owers, said in her inspection report published today.

Anne Owers said:

“This is an extremely positive report. We found that the mutually respectful relationships between staff and prisoners at Stocken created a decent, safe and ordered environment. During the inspection prisoners told us that they felt safe and that staff were approachable and helpful and the published prison statement placed care for ‘all its people’ as its first priority.

“A shared attitude of courtesy and helpfulness existed between prisoners and staff and we found that all prisoners to whom we spoke knew their personal officer.”

The report also praised the “excellent” service provided by the prison. The visitor centre was supported by a uniformed officer who added to the positive impact and value of this facility. However, there were some concerns about the public use of drugs dogs to vet visitors prior to entry to the prison.

There was a prevalent ‘can do’ attitude at Stocken, with a pronounced focus on resettlement and prevention of re-offending, which the report commended. This demonstrated itself in links between qualifications, employment and future work. The availability of national vocational qualifications had been introduced in the main prison kitchen and students in education each had an impressive personalised curriculum and individual tutorials were delivered monthly.

The prison's work with special needs groups from the local community demonstrated itself as mutually valuable. However, the future of the prison farm remained unclear as a decision was awaited from the Prisons Board. In the meantime, the report found that the farm's relevance to prisoners in Stocken was minimal.

The pre-release programme for prisoners was particularly highlighted in the report. The report said:

“Up-to-date housing advice through regular, personal appointments addressed a major area of concern for prisoners. In addition, the local pilot programme, ‘we are coming home’, which engaged prisoners and their significant family contacts in a shared pre-release programme, was a well-planned initiative.

“We spoke to visitors and prisoners about what resettlement meant to them. Two comments, one from a prisoner - *‘my personal officer was alongside from day one’*, another from a prisoner's wife - *‘the impact of*

imprisonment on the family has been devastating...but I have been restored by the staff here' - encapsulated what we found at Stocken and provided a powerful message about the prison."

The main recommendations made in the report are:

- Religious services for Roman Catholics should be reviewed.
- An arrangement for pre-booked visits should be introduced and privacy should be afforded to visitors when being screened by the passive drugs dog.
- The provision of dental services should be improved.
- The physical education department should be encouraged to broaden its curriculum to include shared working in throughcare, education and lifestyles training.
- The long-awaited decision on the future of the farm should be expedited.

In conclusion, Anne Owers said:

"Although we do make some recommendations for development and change, this report is largely a record of a training prison which is actually carrying out work-related training and which is preparing prisoners and their families for resettlement. Its work is to be commended, and should be followed by other similar prisons."

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

"I join the Inspectorate in commending the extremely positive work of the Governor and staff at Stocken. This is a prison which is successfully furthering the resettlement aims of the Prison Service, and doing so in a respectful and safe environment. Brian Edwards and his staff are to be congratulated.

"I am fully confident that Stocken will continue its exceptional work, helping prisoners develop the skills and confidence that are essential for successful resettlement in their communities."

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

1. The full announced inspection of HMP Stocken was carried out between 15 - 17 October 2002.
2. HMP Stocken is a Category C training prison.
3. HM Prison Inspectorate reports are available at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmipris/hmipris.htm>

