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**HMYOI STOKE HEATH– DISAPPOINTING PROGRESS**

Stoke Heath Young Offenders Institution has made little progress since the last inspection, said Anne Owers, Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing the report of an unannounced full follow up inspection.

Stoke Heath holds a demanding mix of young adults and juveniles, on a complicated split site, with different levels of resources and overall too little purposeful activity. The challenges for managers had been further complicated by poor industrial relations. Even allowing for these challenges, inspectors concluded that there had been disappointingly little improvement on either side of the prison to deal with the deficits identified at the previous inspection.

Inspectors were particularly concerned by a number of aspects of safety:

- reception facilities and processes remained poor and juveniles continued to be routinely strip searched without a risk assessment
- the governance of violence reduction and safeguarding was confused
- anti-bullying arrangements were variable
- there was no coherent approach to vulnerable young people, and Stoke Heath remained ill-equipped to manage vulnerable juveniles
- despite some refurbishment, the segregation unit was unacceptably grubby and its regime had deteriorated
- levels of adjudications, use of special cells and use of force were all high
- while suicide and self-harm prevention procedures were satisfactory, there were examples of the inappropriate use of strip conditions for young people in crisis,
- however, child protection arrangements remained good.

Elsewhere, inspectors found

- The quality and cleanliness of residential areas varied,
- Staff-prisoner relationships were mixed, but were helped by a much improved personal officer scheme on the young adult side,
- There had been progress in the management of diversity and in support for foreign nationals.
- There had been some improvement in the quality of learning and skills for young adults, but there was still too little purposeful activity for them, with too

many unemployed and too many locked up in their cells. However, the quality and quantity of purposeful activity for juveniles was better.

- A greater emphasis had been placed on resettlement work since the last inspection: the offender management model was beginning to take root public protection issues were well managed.

Anne Owers said:

“Stoke Heath continued to struggle under the combined weight of its complex split site, differential resources, volatile population, historic under-investment - particularly in purposeful activities for young adults – and, latterly, fractious industrial relations. Resettlement had improved, but this highlighted the lack of progress in some key areas of safety and respectful treatment. The governor had put in place a commendable and ambitious change programme - but she will need the commitment of all staff, as well as regional and national support, if she is to achieve it.”

Phil Wheatley, Director General of the Prison Service, said:

“Stoke Heath's management team continue to work hard to ensure all young people in their care are held in safe and appropriate conditions. Further improvements are necessary and I am confident that progress will continue to be made in the management of this challenging group.

Since the inspection a review has been undertaken to strengthen the anti-bullying procedures in place, and plans are currently being implemented to improve the management of vulnerable young people. The on-going redecoration programme will improve the physical conditions in which young people are held, specifically in the segregation unit. Staff regularly monitor the use of force and special cells to ensure these are used appropriately, and to strip-search young people where necessary in line with Prison Service policy.”

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

1. HMYOI is in the West Midlands and has an operational capacity of 690.
2. Anne Owers has limited availability for interview please call 0207 210 8803 for information.