

STYAL – GENERALLY SAFE ENVIRONMENT BUT SIGNIFICANT UNMET DRUG AND MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS

Positive staff-prisoner relationships allowed a generally safe environment, against significant unmet substance use and mental health needs, said Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing an inspection report today.

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

“Styal has been described as the ‘Holloway of the North’. It has moved very quickly from being a relatively small women’s training prison, with a fairly stable population, to a much larger multi-functional establishment. However, these changes have taken place without the resources and support needed to provide properly for these different and very needy populations.”

The report found that the lack of proper detoxification left women unsafe, in terms of their physical and mental health and the risk of self-harm and bullying.

“Like all women’s locals, Styal receives women with very high levels of drug dependency. Our prisoner survey shows that 41% of women had problems of drug misuse on arrival at the prison. Yet at the time of the inspection, Styal had no proper detoxification unit, and the Governor’s bids for funding such a unit had been rejected. We describe women, in their early days there, fitting and vomiting in their cells, with staff unable to do more than observe and try to alleviate their distress. This is unacceptable.”

The report also found significant unmet mental health needs, in spite of the excellent Reeman Unit. Education and training, sentence planning and resettlement were areas that needed greater co-ordination, and managers were already planning to implement change.

The Inspectorate did, however, highlight examples of good practice:

- The establishment of the Reeman unit for prisoners with severe mental health problems, and an enhanced mental health project linking community and secure care, were particularly welcomed.
- The prison was commended for the excellent staff-prisoner relationships, led by the good example of the Governor.
- An excellent anti-bullying team, but the need to make all staff aware of the considerable scale of the problem.

Concluding, Anne Owers said:

“It is a credit to the Governor and her staff that they have succeeded in maintaining a generally safe environment at the prison. However, it is clear that the absence of properly resourced and supervised detoxification was preventing Styal from effectively carrying out many of the tasks it wants to, and needs to.

“Styal does not have the profile, or some of the specific problems of Holloway, but it has many of the same needs and pressures. It should not be disadvantaged simply because it has so far managed to cope with those pressures, out of sight of the London spotlight. Rather, it needs support and resources to build on its strengths and provide a positive and decent environment for all its population.

“This was a challenge to the area manager and the prison when we inspected; it is likely to be even more so, given the increasing pressure on the prison estate in general and women’s prisons in particular.”

Director General of the Prison Service, Martin Narey, who spent Tuesday 12 November at the prison said:

“This is a fair report and I share the Inspectorate’s anxiety about the need for proper detoxification facilities. I am determined to do all I can to find the resources but they are not currently available.

“What the report does not capture in my view, is the humanity of Styal. Under Madeline Moulden’s leadership, a caring staff group deal compassionately and sensitively with a very troubled prisoner population who arrive from court with very high levels of drug abuse – much higher than the 41% estimated by the Chief Inspector.

“Styal is a prison facing formidable difficulties and despite them, offering a caring and safe environment. The Governor and staff are entitled to be proud of their achievements. It is my job to find them the resources to improve further.”

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. The full announced inspection of HMP and YOI Styal was carried out between 4 and 8 February 2002.

2. HMP and YOI Styal is a local women's prison for north-west England and north Wales, incorporating a Training Prison, Young Offenders Institute and Mother and Baby Unit.
3. HM Prison Inspectorate reports and releases are available at www.homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk/hmipris/hmipris
4. For an electronic copy of the report, please email eve.shuttleworth@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk