



March 2009

020 3334 3527

NOT FOR PUBLICATION BEFORE 00.01 24 MARCH 2009

HMP WELLINGBOROUGH – FAILING TO PROVIDE BASICS

HMP Wellingborough was one of the weakest prisons recently inspected, failing to provide the basics of training and resettlement which should be at the core of its work, said Dame Anne Owers, Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing the report of an announced inspection of the category C male training prison in Northamptonshire.

Inspectors found:

- There were insufficient activities. In addition, places were not fully occupied or allocated according to need, the range and quality of activities was inadequate and not planned or directed so as to improve prisoners' employability. Unemployed prisoners could spend 20 hours a day in their cells.
- Though 500 men a year were discharged into the community, there was no coherent resettlement strategy. There were some good initiatives but they were not integrated into any coordinated strategy aimed at reducing reoffending and assisting reintegration.
- Though problems with the supply of drugs were being tackled, a high proportion of prisoners said that drugs were easy to obtain. There was significant evidence of bullying due to drug-related debt and poor sight-lines in the older units
- The level of assaults was high, and staff were not confident in using the prison's new violence reduction strategy. Self harm was low.
- On some of the older wings, there was little visible staff presence when prisoners were out of their cells; indeed, on one wing it did not appear to inspectors, or to some prisoners, that staff were entirely in control.
- Staff appeared uncomfortable with a population of younger men, sometimes with offences of violence, 40% of whom were from black and minority ethnic communities.
- Parts of the prison were uncared-for and dirty, leading to vermin infestation. Although there was an established personal officer scheme, entries in wing history sheets were poor and there was little evidence that staff encouraged prisoners to engage in education or training.

Anne Owers, Chief Inspector of Prisons, said:

“There was little evidence, during this inspection, that Wellingborough was part of a Prison Service committed to managing and rehabilitating offenders.

“No prisons are easy to run at present, and Wellingborough suffered from a combination of poor design, too few activity spaces, difficulties in moving prisoners on, the availability of drugs, and a younger, more volatile population.

“But it also suffered from a lack of direction and management that had allowed key areas of work to drift. There were good initiatives, but they were happening in isolation.

“The focused work that was taking place to tackle the problem of drug supply is an example of the kind of proactive work that is needed in all areas if Wellingborough is to be an effective training prison.”

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

“While I recognise the concerns raised by the Chief Inspector, I am confident that since the inspection significant improvements have been seen in many areas of the establishment, making Wellingborough a safer and more productive place to hold offenders.

“The number of accredited courses and activity places has increased and this year Wellingborough will meet the levels of purposeful activity that we expect. Wellingborough has also strengthened its procedures to tackle and reduce drugs use, including improved security measures resulting in a number of criminal convictions. This has helped the drug rate fall to below the annual target.”

Notes for Editors

1. A copy of the full report can be found on the HM Inspectorate of Prisons website from 24 March 2009 at <http://inspectrates.justice.gov.uk/hmiprison>
2. The announced full inspection of HMP Wellingborough was carried out from 4-8 August 2008. The last full inspection of HMP Wellingborough took place in May 2005.
3. The operational capacity at HMP Wellingborough is 646.
4. Wellingborough opened as a borstal in 1963 and held young offenders until 1990, when it became a training prison for category C adult men.
5. Anne Owers, Chief Inspector of Prisons, is available for interview. If you would like to speak to her please contact Tom Hodson in the Press Office on 0203 334 3527.