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HMYOI WERRINGTON – SOME IMPROVEMENT BUT SERIOUS SAFETY SHORTFALLS

A turbulent period caused by population pressures had exposed some serious shortfalls in safety at HMYOI Werrington, although in other respects the establishment had developed and improved, said Anne Owers, Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing the report of an unannounced inspection into the Young Offenders Institution.

While basic levels of safety had been maintained, inspectors were concerned that there were routine strip searches on reception, poor management of safeguarding, weak anti-bullying arrangements, and suicide and self-harm prevention needed improvement.

In particular inspectors were concerned that in an apparent attempt to manage more challenging young people, one landing operated as a segregation unit without the proper governance; as well as by a video recording of the forcible strip searching of a young person which included cutting off his clothing, even though at various times he said that he would comply.

However, inspectors found that in other respects Werrington had risen to the challenges facing it, and indeed had improved and developed in a number of areas. In particular, purposeful activity had improved significantly. Young people spent sufficient time out of their cells, and there was a good range of education and skills. In other areas

- Staff-prisoner relationships were generally good, though personal officer work was weak;
- Most accommodation was clean though ventilation on one unit needed improvement;
- Race and diversity were better managed;
- Resettlement was reasonable, though some work had stalled. Sentence planning was good and young people were helped to return to the community..

Anne Owers said:

“Werrington had been through a trying period as a result of the population crisis. Though it had continued to improve in a number of areas, the weaknesses we identified in safety were serious and required urgent management attention. Werrington is still some distance from its stated ambition of being a safe and effective ‘secure college’.”

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

"Generally this is a good report which charts decent progress at an establishment dealing with difficult individuals. The report accurately sets out the challenges faced by prisons under pressure.

"As to the incident involving the strip search of the young person, I have seen the video and reviewed the matter in great detail. I am convinced that at no point in the process was he compliant and that the staff involved dealt with the incident correctly in the circumstances, when faced by a difficult and disturbed young man."

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. A full copy of the HMCIP report into HMYOI Werrington is available from http://inspectrates.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmiprisons/inspect_reports/hmp-yoi-inspections.html
2. The unannounced inspection took place on 16–20 April 2007.
3. HMYOI Werrington has an operational capacity of 162.
4. Anne Owers has limited time available for interviews. To request an interview with her, please call 020 7210 8803

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