

## **WINCHESTER - A PRISON IN RECOVERY WITH A COMMUNITY FOCUS**

Winchester was a good local prison with very positive relationships between staff and prisoners and a sense of vision as a community prison, said Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons, Anne Owers, publishing an inspection report today.

In November 2000, Winchester was identified as a failing prison, with poor industrial relations and demoralised staff. Four months later, on an unannounced inspection in 2001, the inspectorate reported 'an impressive degree of commitment by managers and staff to bring about fundamental changes'.

Anne Owers said:

"It is good to report, after this full announced inspection, that this drive and commitment have been sustained, and significant progress made. In particular we found very good staff-prisoner relationships, and a sense of vision as a community prison, with strong local links and an emphasis on resettlement. The resettlement project, which literally started at reception, was one of the most impressive we have seen."

The pilot resettlement project, under the Custody to Work programme, was prison officer led, with an enthusiastic and committed multi-disciplinary team which had learnt from experience in other prisons, and forged positive links with local statutory and voluntary agencies.

However, the report picks out two areas of particular concern. One was the segregation unit, which was dirty and neglected and needed more rigorous management oversight. The other was the treatment of vulnerable prisoners, who were too easily identifiable and insufficiently protected against bullying, particularly at mealtimes.

The prison was also still holding a number of immigration detainees for whom it could do little or nothing. Due to poor communication, the prison did not know that it was holding two administrative detainees in contravention of stated policy; and those awaiting deportation waited in vain for any indication from the Immigration Service of why they were still held and when they might be removed.

Concluding, Anne Owers said:

"Overall, there was the sense of a prison committed to moving on and improving outcomes for prisoners and links with the local community. Winchester in 2002 was definitely a prison in recovery, and one which had

some impressive positive aspects. However, it is important to ensure that best practice spreads throughout the prison and that decent living conditions and regimes for all prisoners are properly monitored and maintained.”

Director General of the Prison Service, Martin Narey, said:

“I am very pleased that the Chief Inspector has reported the huge improvements that have been made at HMP Winchester. The management and staff of the prison deserve great praise for their work. Winchester typifies the Prison Service’s commitment to resettlement despite the difficulties caused by the population pressures.

“Under Jim Gommersall’s leadership, I expect Winchester to go from strength to strength.”

#### **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

1. The full announced inspection of HMP Winchester was carried out between 20 and 24 May 2002.
2. It is a local prison, holding sentenced and unsentenced category B male prisoners as well as sentenced female prisoners.
3. HM Prison Inspectorate reports and releases are available at [www.homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk/hmipris/hmipris](http://www.homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk/hmipris/hmipris)