

## **WOODHILL - STRUGGLING WITH STAFF SHORTAGES AND HIGH PRISON POPULATION**

Good work at Woodhill was being compromised by the combination of too few staff and too many prisoners, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons, Anne Owers, said in her inspection report published today.

Anne Owers said:

“Overall, Woodhill gave the impression of a good establishment struggling to implement a safe, decent and positive regime - which owed a great deal to the commitment of the prison's managers and the positive attitude of staff.

“However, its ability to provide a proper regime and activities were being undermined by the rise in the prison population and severe staff shortages. Good staff were considering leaving, prisoners on some wings were frustrated, and safety and decency were being compromised.

“Both managers and staff will be unable to deliver what they want and what prisoners need unless staffing levels rise and prisoner numbers decline.”

The report pointed to good work that was under way:

- The positive overall attitude of staff, who were attempting to do what was possible within the constraints
- A safe, decent environment with good staff-prisoner relationships and a low use of force in spite of the large and complex population
- An active suicide prevention committee and co-ordinator
- A strong emphasis on education, with a broad-based curriculum geared to the specific needs of prisoners - though this was suffering due to the prison population and staff shortages
- Excellent sentence planning work, which needed to be integrated with resettlement work
- Improvements in the regime of the Close Supervision Centre - but with further work to be done.

But it also raised areas for improvement:

- The care available for prisoners in early days of custody, particularly the induction and reception procedures, where there were gaps and inconsistencies
- The implementation of the race relations policy - the Race Relations Liaison Officer had insufficient time and only limited monitoring was carried out

- Contacts with outside agencies to facilitate resettlement had been eroded due to staff shortages and the prison needed to develop its core resettlement strategy.

Commenting on the report, Director General of the Prison Service, Martin Narey, said:

“I’m very pleased that the Chief Inspector has recognised the excellent work at Woodhill. Bob Mullen and his staff can be proud of these achievements.

“At the time of the inspection, Woodhill, like many employers in the area, was suffering from staff recruitment problems. The Governor’s response was imaginative and dramatic and the prison is now fully staffed.

“Under Bob Mullen’s leadership Woodhill is a fine prison and getting better.”

#### **NOTE TO EDITORS:**

1. The unannounced follow-up inspection of HMP Woodhill was carried out between 18 and 22 February 2002.
2. HMP Woodhill in Milton Keynes is a core local prison, within the high security estate. It holds male prisoners, both sentenced and unsentenced including young offenders. It also has a Close Supervision Centre.
3. HM Prison Inspectorate reports are available at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmipris/hmipris.htm>