

PRESS RELEASE

STRICTLY EMBARGOED to 12.01am, October 10, 2011 – follow-up reports by Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland into Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre and Women’s Prison

Small improvements no substitute for overhaul of women’s prison and young offenders centre

GREAT efforts have been made by staff and small improvements gained at Hydebank Wood Women’s Prison and Young Offenders Centre, but further progress cannot be achieved within the present regimes operating in both facilities.

That’s the view of the Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland in two follow-up inspection reports published today (Monday 10 October 2011) for Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre and Women’s Prison. The reports make 100 recommendations in respect of the Young Offenders Centre, and 90 in respect of the Women’s Prison.

“Staff at both facilities are to be commended for the efforts they have made to deliver improvements since our last inspections and indeed some progress has been made,” said Dr Michael Maguire. “However, it is our considered view that further and substantial improvements in each facility are not possible in the current operating environments at both the Women’s Prison and the Young Offenders Centre.

“The improvements are welcome but they are no substitute for the overhaul required in both centres.”

The inspections were carried out by the Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice in Northern Ireland, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority and the Education and Training Inspectorate and were unannounced follow-ups to full inspections carried out in 2007.

Nick Hardwick, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons in England and Wales, said; “There were too many lock-downs, association regularly started late and finished early, and there was insufficient work to keep prisoners occupied. Punishments for disciplinary offences were too severe for young men and security measures were not sufficiently intelligence-led.”

Both follow-up reports reiterated previously stated views that, in the case of Ash House, the Northern Ireland Prison Service should create, 'a separate and dedicated women's facility, without which the needs of this vulnerable population are unlikely to be properly met,' and that Hydebank Wood YOC is 'quite simply an unsuitable place to hold children under the age of 18.'

Inspectors urged the Northern Ireland Prison Service to collaborate with the Youth Justice Agency and Department of Justice to 'urgently relocate all male children from Hydebank YOC to Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre.'

"These situations have not changed and our considered recommendations remain," said Dr. Maguire. "Furthermore, we believe that the education services in both facilities need to be addressed and tailored to the particular needs of prisoners in both the Women's Prison and Hydebank Wood.

"In both establishments we believe it is now necessary to provide effective collaboration with external education and training providers – such as further education and/or work-based learning suppliers – as a matter of urgency."

Dr Maguire added that the health needs of both young offenders and women prisoners were not properly met as health services were under-resourced and poorly managed. The mental health needs of prisoners were 'a particular concern', as was the lack of opportunity for them to spend time in the open air and to participate in exercise.

RQIA has published a separate, detailed report into healthcare provision at Hydebank Wood YOC and Ash House Women's Prison. This makes specific recommendations for those organisations involved in the commissioning and provision of healthcare services within these prisons.

ENDS

Notes to editors

- The reports published today are follow-ups to full inspections carried out and reported in 2007.
- Full copies of all the reports are available at the Criminal Justice Inspection Website – www.cjini.org
- The Hydebank Wood Women's Prison follow-up inspection report can be downloaded [HERE](#).
- The Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre follow-up inspection report can be downloaded [HERE](#).
- RQIA's separate, detailed report into healthcare provision at Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre and Ash House Women's Prison is available at www.rqia.org.uk.

Notes end

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