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**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN CUSTODY –
CONDITIONS DETERIORATING**

Young people's experience of custody has deteriorated, said Nick Hardwick, Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing a thematic report, *Children and Young People in Custody 2010-11: an analysis of the experiences of 15 to 18-year-olds in prison*.

The report, published jointly with the Youth Justice Board, sets out how young people aged 15 to 18 describe their own experience of imprisonment in 2010-11. The number of children and young people in custody, held in young offender institutions, continued to fall during 2010-11 from 1,977 to 1,822. As a result, in 2010-11 the children and young people's estate has reduced, with 710 spaces decommissioned and five young offender institutions closed, including a unit for young women.

Demographic information indicates a changing profile of the children and young people in custody and reflects the vulnerability of the population. The proportion of black and minority ethnic young men, already over-represented, rose to 39% (from 33% in 2009-10), the number of foreign national young men increased to 6% (from 4% in 2009-10) and the number who identified as Muslim reached 16% (compared with 13% in 2009-10).

The report found that:

- over half of young men (53%, an increase from 39% in 2009-10) and 48% of young women said it was their first time in custody – a group more likely to report feeling unsafe;
- over a quarter of young men and over half of young women said they had spent some time in local authority care;
- almost a quarter of young women and 13% of young men had children of their own;
- a fifth of young men and 38% of young women reported emotional or mental health problems;
- compared with 2009-10, young men were less positive about their treatment in reception and the facilities offered on arrival, and fewer said that they felt safe on their first night;
- although the proportion of young men who said they had ever felt unsafe had fallen, fewer felt that they could tell someone if they were being victimised or believed a member of staff would take it seriously;
- although getting a job was cited by young men (and by 52% of young women) as most likely to stop them offending, fewer than half of young people said they knew who to contact in the establishment for help with finding employment;
- when asked if they had done something during their time in custody that would make them less likely to offend in future, only half of all sentenced young people answered positively, despite 92% of young men and 93% of young women indicating they would like to stop offending; however
- the amount of time spent out of cell had generally improved and more young men said they had daily association.

Nick Hardwick, Chief Inspector of Prisons, said:

“This report has highlighted some deterioration in children and young people’s experience of custody. Despite the falling numbers, this population has well-defined vulnerability and increasing numbers within minority groups. The need, therefore, to provide these young people

with support during their time in custody and in preparation for release is as greater as ever.”

Frances Done, Chair of the Youth Justice Board, said:

"The YJB commissioned this report to identify the progress made and the areas which need further improvement. We are very concerned that in some areas young people's experience of custody has deteriorated although in some it has improved. We will be looking closely at the experiences reported by young people and working with all secure establishments to make sure that young people's time in custody has positive results and that everyone working in youth justice is focused on rehabilitating young people to help them achieve a more purposeful life."

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. A copy of the full report can be found on the HM Inspectorate of Prisons website from 26 October 2011 at <http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/inspectorate-reports/hmi-prisons/thematic-research.htm>
2. This is the seventh report that HMI Prisons has published jointly with the Youth Justice Board. It draws together the reported experiences of 15- to 18-year-olds held in prisons and provides an opportunity to compare young people's perceptions across establishments and over time.
3. The report is based on the experience of 1,115 young men in all nine establishments and 47 young women in all four establishments in which they were held. The male children and young people's estate now has eight establishments following the closure of the young people's unit at Stoke Heath, and the female estate three units following the closure of the Toscana Unit. These represent 65% and 95% respectively of the total population of young men and women in prison at the time these surveys took place, from 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011.
4. HM Inspectorate of Prisons is an independent inspectorate, inspecting places of detention to report on conditions and treatment, and promote positive outcomes for those detained and the public.
5. Please contact Jane Parsons in HMI Prisons Press Office on 0207 035 2123 or 07880 787452 from 0915 to 1415 Monday to Friday if you would like more information.