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HMYOI LANCASTER FARMS – SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS

Lancaster Farms was much improved and well equipped for its proposed new role as a training prison, said Nick Hardwick, Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing the report of an unannounced inspection of the Lancashire young offender institution.

HMP Lancaster Farms is the only dedicated young offender institution in the north west and, at the time of inspection, held both remanded and sentenced young adults. It was due to re-role to become a training establishment. Its last inspection in 2008 was highly critical, and noted a lack of staff engagement and pervasive poor relationships. This inspection found significant improvements.

Inspectors were pleased to find that:

- suicide and self-harm prevention work was impressive;
- security was proportionate and there was little substance abuse;
- staff appeared more engaged with prisoners and the personal officer scheme was effective;
- there was better access to basic facilities, such as phones and showers;
- health care was very good; and

- there had been significant improvements in the quality of learning and skills provision.

However, inspectors had some concerns:

- levels of violence among this volatile age group remained high and required further preventative work;
- although early days were generally well managed, some first night risk assessments were inappropriately deferred to the next day;
- time out of cell remained limited, but this should improve once Lancaster Farms becomes a training facility;
- there was still insufficient custody planning and offender management remained variable; and
- the re-role would mean reductions in the health care budget and, in particular, the inpatient facility would close: the establishment must revise its health needs assessment and adjust provision as the nature of the new population becomes clear so that no damaged young men fall through the cracks.

Nick Hardwick said:

“Lancaster Farms has made significant progress since our last visit. It is now a safer place, although the continuing levels of violence mean that there is no scope for complacency. It is now also a decent place, with a more engaged staff and some improved relationships. These are important changes which, together with a step change improvement in the quality of learning and skills, mean that the establishment is in a sound position to re-role to a training function. There will be major challenges ahead, not least ensuring adequate health care and resettlement services to meet future needs but, overall, Lancaster Farms is to be congratulated on how far it has already come.”

Michael Spurr, Chief Executive Officer of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), said:

"This is a positive report and I am particularly pleased about the Chief Inspector's comments on safety, decency and learning and skills at Lancaster Farms, all vital areas in any prison.

"I am pleased that the Chief Inspector recognises the progress since the last inspection and I am confident the prison will address areas where shortcomings have been identified."

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. A copy of the report can be found on the HM Inspectorate of Prisons website from 22 November 2011 at <http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/inspectorate-reports/hmi-prisons/prison-and-yoi-inspections/index.htm>
2. 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.
3. This unannounced full follow-up inspection was carried out from 1-10 June 2011.
4. HMYOI Lancaster Farms is a young offender institution holding young adult male prisoners aged 18-21, whether sentenced or on remand.
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 or to request an interview with Nick Hardwick.