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020 7035 2123

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### **HMP WORMWOOD SCRUBS – RISING TO ITS CHALLENGES**

HMP Wormwood Scrubs faces many challenges as a large, local urban prison, but has made some welcome progress, said Nick Hardwick, Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing the report of an unannounced inspection of the local west London jail.

HMP Wormwood Scrubs holds 1,200 men, almost half of whom were unconvicted and held on remand at the time of the inspection. A third of those sentenced had less than six months to serve. On average, the prison processed 1,200 men moving in and out of the prison each week. Two out of five prisoners were foreign nationals and under a quarter of these had English as their first language. The mental health in-reach team looked after more than 50 prisoners with the most severe and enduring mental illnesses. Almost 300 prisoners were receiving interventions from the drug and alcohol team, while 232 prisoners were waiting for literacy classes.

Inspectors were pleased to find that:

- the prison was safer than at the time of our last inspection, although bullying and anti-violence measures needed development;
- there was good work both to reduce the supply of drugs through targeted security measures, and to reduce demand by good treatment and support;
- relationships between prisoners and staff were reasonably good;

- health care was generally good;
- the prison worked hard to manage its foreign national population effectively; and
- there were innovative plans to support prisoners on release and reduce the risk that they re-offend but some of these had yet to come to fruition.

However, inspectors were concerned to find that:

- prisoners spent too much time locked in their cells with nothing productive to do: two out of five prisoners were locked in their cells during the working part of the day;
- there were insufficient activity places, but those that were available were not well used, with attendance at vocational training only 55%;
- the prison could not meet many prisoners' basic need for help with reading and writing; and
- a few cells were in very bad condition, with broken windows patched up with cardboard.

Nick Hardwick said:

"Wormwood Scrubs has risen to some formidable challenges. It is an improving prison that has now got many of the basics right and has some innovative plans to address those areas that still need improvement. It is a safer and more decent place than in the past but it now needs to ensure that its plans for learning and skills and resettlement achieve a similar improvement."

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

"This is an encouraging report and I am pleased the Chief Inspector has identified that despite a high turnover of prisoners, Wormwood Scrubs was safe, with good staff-prisoner relationships and effective

security measures. The Chief Inspector's comments on work with foreign national prisoners and on pre-release measures are also welcome.

"The Governor and staff will now work to ensure that access to activity places is increased, and that the key partnerships with education and healthcare providers focus more effectively on basic literacy needs and on mental health services respectively. These measures should help reduce re-offending and thereby protect the public."

ENDS

**Notes to Editors:**

1. A copy of the report can be found on the HM Inspectorate of Prisons website from 18 November 2011 at [www.justice.gov.uk/inspectors/hmi-prisons](http://www.justice.gov.uk/inspectors/hmi-prisons)
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 20-24 June 2011.
4. HMP Wormwood Scrubs is a category B local male prison, serving the Crown and magistrates' courts of North West London.
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.