



24 January 2011

020 7035 2123

NOT FOR PUBLICATION BEFORE 00.01, TUESDAY, 25 JANUARY 2011

**COLNBROOK IMMIGRATION REMOVAL CENTRE – SOME PROGRESS,
BUT STILL A LONG WAY TO GO**

There had been some improvements at Colnbrook Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) and short-term holding facility, but a large number of concerns remained, said Nick Hardwick, Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing the report of an unannounced inspection of the secure facility at Heathrow.

Many of the male detainees held at Colnbrook IRC have previously been in prison and some have proved difficult to manage elsewhere. The short-term holding facility (STHF) houses men and women and acts as a first days unit for the main centre. Our last inspection suggested it was at the outer limits of its capacity to cope.

Inspectors were concerned to find that:

- safety remained a concern, compounded by a significant drug problem which Colnbrook had only just begun to address;
- the STHF offered a poor environment and limited regime and was an inappropriate place to hold women;
- some security responses were disproportionate, with high use of force and separation – not all of which was properly managed;
- work around diversity had deteriorated and too little use was made of interpretation; and

- although staff continued to work hard to provide a good welfare service, the resources devoted to this important area were being reduced.

However, inspectors were pleased to see that:

- violent incidents had reduced with the introduction of a comprehensive violence reduction strategy, better security and improved anti-bullying arrangements;
- the treatment of the significant numbers at risk of self-harm was generally good;
- staff appeared more confident and had benefited from a mentoring scheme; and
- Colnbrook had sustained improvements in the quantity and quality of activity, with an expanded range of paid work and better education provision.

Nick Hardwick said:

“When we last inspected Colnbrook, we reported that a demoralised staff was struggling to cope with the array of needs and risks posed by a population that included some of the most challenging, vulnerable and frustrated detainees in the immigration estate. This inspection identified some progress: staff appeared more confident, violence reduction arrangements had improved, a start had been made on addressing the drug problem and the amount of activity had increased.

“However, in other areas we report much less positively: most detainees still felt unsafe, work on diversity had deteriorated and despite plans for change, our previous main recommendations, that women should no longer be held in the short-term holding unit and that the vulnerable detainee unit should close, had still not been achieved.

Overall Colnbrook still has a long way to go but we are pleased to be able to identify some progress on this journey.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. A copy of the report can be found on the HM Inspectorate of Prisons website from 25 January 2011 at 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 16-27 August 2010.
4. Colnbrook Immigration Removal Centre operates as a secure immigration removal centre housing adult men and as a short-term holding facility holding both men and women. It is run by Serco.
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.