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020 7210 8643

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**COLNBROOK IMMIGRATION REMOVAL CENTRE – SIGNIFICANTLY LESS SAFE**

Colnbrook Immigration Removal Centre was struggling to cope with a more challenging and vulnerable mix of detainees and was significantly less safe than at the time of the last inspection, said Anne Owers, Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing the report of an unannounced full follow-up inspection of the centre, run by Serco, near Heathrow airport.

Ex-prisoners now made up 80% of the centre's population. They included violent and sexual offenders and a significant number of detainees who had been disruptive elsewhere. Others had significant psychiatric and medical problems. Some detainees had been held there for many months, heightening their anxiety and frustration. As a result of this more challenging population and despite the efforts of staff, most aspects of safety were under strain.

The inspection also noted that:

- Reception and discharge arrangements were unsatisfactory, holding a mix of men, women, ex-prisoners, new and vulnerable detainees. Only a third of detainees said they felt safe on their first night.
- Use of force was high and some detainees spent lengthy periods in separation
- Some staff found it difficult to manage challenging behaviour
- Levels of anxiety and fear among detainees were high, compounded by the shortage of legal advice and lack of up-to-date information about their cases. 480 self-harm at risk forms had been opened in the last six months, but, though staff were caring, these procedures were not well-managed
- Mental health provision was severely stretched by an increase in the number of detainees with psychiatric problems

On the positive side:

- residential areas remained clean and well maintained
- detainees had plenty of time out of their rooms and good access to activities, although the quality and quantity of education and training remained insufficient.
- health services, in general, had improved
- facilities to communicate with the outside world were good
- and there was now an effective welfare team helping detainees to plan for their removal or release.

Anne Owers said:

“Colnbrook is required to hold the most challenging and vulnerable detainees in the immigration estate. In recent months, the population had become an even more volatile mix, as the number of ex-prisoners and those considered difficult to manage elsewhere swelled. To compound this, some of the most vulnerable detainees who could not be cared for in other IRCs were also housed at Colnbrook. Staff and managers conceded that the establishment was at the outer limits of its capacity to cope. It is essential that the Border and Immigration Agency deals expeditiously with casework and ensures a better balance of detainees as soon as other accommodation becomes available.”

#### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

1. A full copy of the HMCIP report into Colnbrook Immigration Removal Centre is available from [http://inspectorates.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmiprison/inspect\\_reports/hmp-yoi-inspections.html](http://inspectorates.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmiprison/inspect_reports/hmp-yoi-inspections.html)
2. Colnbrook Immigration Removal Centre is the most secure facility unit in the immigration detention estate and is run by Serco. It has the paraphernalia of a category B prison as well as 24-hour medical services
3. The unannounced follow-up inspection took place between 18-22 June 2007. The previous inspection took place in 2005.
4. Anne Owers is available for interview. To request an interview with her, please call 020 7210 8803.

**ENDS**

