

Update to the report of the unannounced
full follow-up inspection in July 2011 of

HMYOI Feltham
(young people under 18)

by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

Background

- 1.1 HM Inspectorate of Prisons carried out an unannounced full follow-up inspection of HMYOI Feltham in July 2011. Following the disturbances in English cities at the end of August 2011, the Inspectorate visited the prison again on 12 September to establish whether there had been an increase in admissions and whether this had had any significant impact on the findings from the original report. The visit focused on a small number of areas likely to be most affected by any change to the population.
- 1.2 Feltham's task was to move significant numbers of the existing population to other establishments (usually to the north of England, with the majority going to HMYOI Hindley) to make way for new receptions of young people involved in the riots.
- 1.3 During the period of disturbances in the community, Feltham experienced a 'copycat riot' in the Feltham B (young adults) gym. Feltham had concerns that this behaviour would be repeated in Feltham A (young people 18) side but this did not materialise.
- 1.4 The prison did not keep a running total of the number of young people involved in the riots it received, but staff were able to give some snapshot figures. During and immediately after the riots, Feltham received in a week the number of new arrivals it would normally expect in a month: approximately 60 young people. Two weeks prior to the Inspectorate's visit on 12 September, 49 young people involved in the riots were in custody at Feltham; this had reduced to 34 at the time of our visit.
- 1.5 Staff did not know how many young people had been transferred out, but they continued to get overcrowding drafts. They had been asked to move 70 young people out of Feltham A and B during the week of our second visit, and 21 spaces were being held in Feltham A for new arrivals. The prison expected to continue to hold a significant number of spaces in anticipation of further arrests.
- 1.6 Staff said that there was a lack of helpful advice from the Youth Justice Board (YJB) and the Young People's Team in the National Offender Management Service (NOMS). They were not aware of a central strategy to manage the unprecedented numbers of new arrivals and transfers, including those they were expecting as further arrests were made. They said there had been good communication between the young people's establishments, but that there was a need for a NOMS/YJB strategy to help address the broader issues.

Safety

- 1.7 A significant number of young people arrived at reception after midnight, having spent a whole day in courts (and presumably in police cells before that, after being removed from the streets). The majority had never been in the criminal justice system before.
- 1.8 Risk assessments on new arrivals were completed by reception staff and all were seen by an officer from the behaviour management group to assess the risk from others or to others, including gang affiliations. Staff relied solely on what young people told them, which was a risk. Youth Offending Teams were unable to respond and get into the prison quickly to conduct risk assessments and bail applications.

- 1.9 Young people remained on the induction unit for only two days, rather than the usual five, and this resulted in young people, many of whom were in custody for the first time, arriving on residential units without sufficient knowledge of prison rules and routines.
- 1.10 Young people already in the prison had negative perceptions of those involved in the riots as they felt that they were responsible for the transfer of their friends to other prisons. They had seen their home areas attacked on television and were worried about family and friends there.
- 1.11 Those involved in the riots were dispersed across the units and existing prisoners were moved to avoid possible altercations. However, there had been attacks on those involved in the riots and this was now the primary cause of fights. Restraint had risen slightly, but it was no longer mainly to prevent group fights (as it had been at the time of the inspection), but to separate individuals.
- 1.12 Young people on different units had formed themselves into gangs and there had been fights between units. This included those who had not been involved in gangs in the community before and who had become part of the unit gang to protect themselves. This was a change to the situation identified during the inspection, when the task had been to keep known gangs (and particularly those from different postcodes) apart.
- 1.13 Young people who had not previously experienced violence were witnessing it first hand in custody and some had become more vulnerable as a result. Although there had been no actual self-harming, the number of open ACCTs had increased by 200% due to staff concerns for new young people.

Respect

- 1.14 Staff told us that they had very little time (usually between two and 24 hours) to make decisions and move young people. Many young people were unable to tell their families that they were moving. Although many were unhappy with being transferred, no one refused to move.
- 1.15 Many solicitors needed to see their clients, and there was therefore a great deal of pressure on the availability of legal visits.
- 1.16 By the time of our visit on 12 September, some transferred young people were beginning to return to Feltham.

Purposeful activity

- 1.17 Initially the education department was unable to manage the number of new arrivals and there was a waiting list to receive education. By the time of our visit on 12 September, this problem had been resolved.

Resettlement

- 1.18 There was now a constant turnover of young people and work with some individual young people had been interrupted because they had moved. This had affected the work of the

behaviour management group who had been successfully engaging with the most troublesome young people at the time of the inspection. Many had been transferred out before their programme had been completed, thereby moving the problem to another establishment.

- 1.19 The number of enquiries from parents and families wanting to find out information about individual prisoners and the prison had increased significantly.
- 1.20 Conversely some young people had been ostracised by their families due to their involvement in the riots. Some families had told officers that they were thinking of moving home due to their community's animosity towards those who had family members involved in the riots.

Main challenges

- 1.21 In relation to the care of young people in custody, the main challenges identified during this visit to Feltham on 12 September were:
- the lack of information about new arrivals, which made it difficult to carry out initial assessments to keep them safe
 - the huge increase of movement across the whole of the young people under 18 estate and the resulting lack of continuity, which impacted on new receptions as well as the settled population
 - the introduction of some young people to gangs and a violent culture in prison, which they had not previously experienced
 - the distance young people who had been moved to the north of England were held from home, and the lack of contact with their families and youth offending teams.

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