

When red spells safe



Manchester-based charity Mines Advisory Group's latest campaign to tackle the use of anti-personnel landmines around the world is to be spearheaded by Channel 4 News presenter Jon Snow.

The Nobel Peace Prize-winning charity launched its Clear Landmines Now awareness week on 28 March, ahead of the UN's International Mine Awareness Day on 4 April.

Conflict zones

MAG is urging both celebrities and members of the public to wear a pair of red "safe socks" on the day to help promote the charity's mine clearance work in 16 countries. The campaign has

been launched after recent statistics suggest the use of landmines in the last year was at its highest since 2004.

Snow, who has extensively reported from conflict zones where landmines are still in use – and whose red socks are a trademark – said: "I'm proud to be lending my support – and feet – to this venture.

Free meal

"Landmines kill and injure people every day of the year. I have seen it for myself – from the Falklands to Libya, from the Congo to Afghanistan. Many of the victims are children."

Manchester-based restaurant chain Tampopo will be offering free main meals to diners wearing the socks.

Former war reporter Martin Bell is also a patron of MAG.

CHRIS ARDEN

Styal prison unit 'unsuitable': inspector

The chief inspector of prisons has described the state of women held in a special unit at a Cheshire prison as more shocking and distressing than anything he has ever seen on inspection.

Nick Hardwick said that the Keller Unit at Styal women's prison remained a "wholly unsuitable" place to safely hold and manage seriously damaged women, and that the most distressing thing he saw was the levels of self-harm among the women held on the unit.

He said prison officers often had to use force to remove ligatures from the necks of women intent on harming themselves.

Night visit

Hardwick's recent report was published following an unannounced follow-up inspection of the prison last year. During a night visit the inspectors also found that two male agency staff were responsible for monitoring two women on constant supervision on the unit.

"The use of men we felt was inappropriate and could have made women more anxious as

many women on the unit have been abused by men," said Hardwick.

He added that the role of the Keller unit was still unclear at the time of inspection. All the women on the unit were mental health patients but it was not being led by a clinical manager. "There seemed to be some

Staff on the Keller unit at Styal were "deeply impressive".
Hardwick



confusion about whether it was a behavioural management unit or whether it was for women with mental health problems," he said.

Meeting needs

Overall, however, Styal emerged well from the inspection and Hardwick observed some very dedicated work by prison staff and others.

Despite the challenges it faced, Styal was meeting the

needs of most prisoners and the majority of women felt safe, concluded Hardwick.

Styal became notorious when six prisoners killed themselves in 2002-03 and the prison ombudsman produced a damning report. As recently as 2009 Hardwick's predecessor warned of more deaths if the prison did not improve.

Following his recent inspection Hardwick said the staff on the Keller unit were "deeply impressive" and across Styal the dedication shown by many officers and governors was "frankly humbling".

Disruptive

But he believed that the disturbed women in the Keller unit should not be in prison. While they were, women's prisons should receive the same resources as men's prisons are given for the most disruptive prisoners, so they could be held in close supervision centres and given the therapy they need.

Hardwick reflected on a lack of progress since the 2007 Corston report called for an overhaul of the way vulnerable women were treated.

"The responsibility lies with

successive governments and parliament, who need to follow the recommendations made by Baroness Corston in her review of women in prison published five years ago," he said.

Majority

Michael Spurr, chief executive of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) – the government department that manages prisons – said Hardwick's inspection recognised the continuing improvements made at Styal, adding that the prison is doing a good job of meeting the needs of the significant majority of women in its care. NOMS was considering whether to update or replace the Keller unit.

KELLY MATTISON

CORRECTION

In our interview with Tom Watson last week, we misattributed to him the words: "So James Murdoch should be very worried, as he authorised the payments." These were not his words. Apologies for any confusion caused.