

16 December 2020

By email: [secofstate@justice.gov.uk](mailto:secofstate@justice.gov.uk)

The Rt Hon Robert Buckland QC MP  
Justice Secretary

**Amanda Spielman**  
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

Dear Secretary of State

### **Urgent Notification: Rainsbrook Secure Training Centre**

I am writing to update you on the findings of the recent monitoring visit to Rainsbrook STC. The concerns that the joint inspectorates found at this visit are serious. As a result, in accordance with the joint inspection framework for secure training centres (STCs) that refers to the protocol between HM Chief Inspector of Prisons and the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), we intend to invoke the Urgent Notification (UN) process.

As you are aware, an assurance visit to Rainsbrook STC was carried out by Ofsted, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) between 26 and 29 October 2020. The inspectorates notified our findings to senior managers in the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and Youth Custody Service (YCS). In particular, we were concerned that newly admitted children were being locked into their bedrooms for a 14-day period and only allowed out each day for 30 minutes. An urgent meeting was convened with the MoJ and YCS on 5 November 2020, where the inspectorates received assurances that immediate actions would be taken to address the concerns. In addition, these deficiencies were set out in my letter to you of 5 November 2020, and we were pleased to receive your reply of 18 November 2020 confirming that appropriate action had been taken.

A further joint monitoring visit was carried out on 10 December 2020 to assess the actions taken by the STC to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children. Inspectors found that leaders and managers have made limited progress. Of significance is that children have continued to be locked in their bedrooms for substantial periods of time.

Key findings include:

- Five recently admitted children independently told inspectors that they had been locked into their bedrooms for up to 14-days and only allowed out each day for up to 30 minutes for fresh air.

- Children in the Reverse Cohort Unit (where children newly admitted isolate to prevent the spread of COVID-19) have had little time out of their rooms and substantially less than the four hours per day cited as the regime by the STC.
- Children's daily experiences are bleak. They continue to receive a spartan regime. They receive little encouragement to get up in the mornings and there are very few determined efforts by staff to engage meaningfully with children.
- There is no girls Reverse Cohort Unit as there is for boys, despite some empty residential units due to the lower population. As a result, a girl was placed separately on a mainstream girl's residential unit with other children who were no longer isolating. This child had no time out of her room on two days and only very brief periods of less than 40 minutes on three subsequent days.
- The centre acknowledge that one boy was placed on an 'incorrect management plan' in Reverse Cohort Unit conditions due to miscommunications about his medical vulnerabilities. Between 26 November 2020 and 10 December 2020 this child had a total of four hours out of his room. The centre has launched an internal investigation.
- The regime states that children should complete three hours education each day in their rooms. Education work packs are issued, and children use an electronic tablet to upload their work. Records are poor and there is no evidence that children's education entitlement is being met.
- Senior managers were unaware of the regime being implemented by staff. They were given the opportunity to provide additional evidence after the site visited ended. They have failed to present any compelling or substantive evidence that the experiences children reported to inspectors is in doubt.

As required by the Protocol referenced in the joint inspection framework, we have set out the key evidence underpinning the decision to invoke the UN process. We have informed the Director of Rainsbrook STC, the Executive Director of the YCS and officials of the MoJ of our decision. We will publish a monitoring visit report shortly.

The decision to invoke the UN process in relation to STCs is determined by the judgement of the chief inspectors of Ofsted, HMIP and CQC. This decision is informed by evidence from the monitoring visit, and as referenced in the joint

inspection framework for STCs as set out in the Protocol between HM Chief Inspector and the MoJ, may include:

- Poor healthy prison test assessments (HMI Prisons' inspection methodology is outlined in the HMI Prisons Inspection Framework)
- The pattern of the healthy prison test judgements
- Repeated poor assessments
- The type of prison and the risks presented
- The vulnerability of those detained
- The failure to achieve recommendations
- The Inspectorate's confidence in the prison's capacity for change and improvement.

The joint inspection framework for STCs sets out that this letter will be placed in the public domain, and that the Secretary of State commits to responding publicly to the concerns raised within 28 calendar days. The response should explain how the care, safety and wellbeing of children at the STC will be improved in both the immediate and longer term.

We do not underestimate the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic presents for the leaders and staff at Rainsbrook STC. However, this does not excuse the failings the inspectorates have found.

We have decided to invoke the UN process because of the continued poor care experienced by children, the lack of leadership grip and lack of oversight of practice by local and national leaders. Since 2015, every joint inspection has judged the centre as 'requires improvement to be good' with the effectiveness of leaders and managers being judged 'inadequate' on two occasions. This provides little confidence in the centre's capacity to improve the care, wellbeing and safety of children.

In light of these serious concerns an expedient response would be appreciated to provide reassurance of the actions being taken to improve the safety, welfare and care of the children at Rainsbrook STC.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amanda Spielman".

**Amanda Spielman**

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector