

Executive Summary

- i. The independent Medway Improvement Board was appointed on 26th January 2016 by the Secretary of State for Justice. The Board was appointed as a response to a BBC Panorama programme on 11th January which highlighted the allegations of physical and emotional abuse of young people by staff at Medway STC.
- ii. The Board was asked to investigate the current safeguarding arrangements at Medway STC and report to the Secretary of State on the confidence of its members in the capability of YJB and other organisations to meet appropriate safeguarding standards at Medway in the future and on performance and monitoring arrangements. The Board was also asked to feed into the Improvement Plan that G4S were asked to put in place.
- iii. In the time that the Board was appointed, they spoke to 34 stakeholders in person, either as a Board or on a one-to-one basis. Stakeholders included key individuals from G4S and YJB, inspectors from HMIP and Ofsted, the Children's Commissioner, and senior staff at Medway Council. The Board also spoke to staff and children at the STC and conducted a roundtable event with stakeholders from lobby groups and charities.
- iv. From very early on in the investigations, the Board found problems that members found alarming. The most immediate concerns were raised in the interim advice presented to the Secretary of State on 2nd March.
- v. The Board found that there was a lack of clarity on the purpose of an STC and that leadership within the STC has driven a culture that appears to be based on control and contract compliance rather than rehabilitation and safeguarding vulnerable young people. The Board continues to have significant concerns that this culture and the emphasis on contract compliance may be leading to reports of falsification of records etc. that were seen in the Panorama broadcast.
- vi. There are blurred lines of accountability and an ambiguous management structure. A clearer child-based vision needs to be driven by strong leadership. The purpose of STCs needs to be more clearly articulated with a focus on prompting a nurturing and safe environment. The Board is recommending that an independent Governing Body be appointed to provide overall oversight and scrutiny arrangements for safeguarding in all STCs.
- vii. Current safeguarding measures are insufficient and outdated. There is too much emphasis on control and contract compliance and not enough on the best interests and mental wellbeing of the trainees. YJB has not done enough to change this and current policies and practices need to be reviewed.
- viii. The Board is not convinced that the various organisations that currently play a role in scrutinising and responding to safeguarding at Medway STC are coordinated in their approach. This increases the risk of safeguarding issues falling through a gap. These findings further support the need for an independent governing body.
- ix. There is a history of similar concerns being raised repeatedly in letters from whistle-blowers and former staff. The Board feels that policies which form part of the STC contract need to be reviewed to ensure that they support the overall safety of young people rather than

- 2.25 Ben Saunders noted that the quality of training given to middle managers (this is the level that includes DOMS) was not adequate. He also said that more should be done to recruit and develop professional frontline staff. He felt that the current focus on process or task rather than people has led to a high staff attrition rate.
- 2.26 Board members also spoke to frontline staff at the Centre, including recent recruits, Residential Service Managers (RSMs), Team Leaders, and Duty Operational Managers (DOMs). This was done through both 1 to 1 interviews and more informal conversations during visits.
- 2.27 Staff invariably spoke of their shock at the Panorama programme and of their belief that the incidents shown were not typical or representative of daily life at the STC. At the same time, there was recognition that staff tended to have varying levels of skills and capability, particularly at Team Leader level. It was considered that this was because staff had been promoted earlier than might have otherwise been the case.
- 2.28 Staff expressed concern that not all of their colleagues shared the same values and could not say whether there could be a repeat of the same kind of treatment towards young people has had been shown.
- 2.29 Many members of staff criticised G4S management. An experienced DOM also claimed that when issues are brought to their attention, little or nothing is done. He also noted that there are currently no formal meetings of the DOM team with management, and DOMs play no role in the recruitment process for new staff.
- 2.30 The Board also noted that DOMs do not appear to be held to account for their decisions in a way that is proportionate to the apparent amount of power that they have in the STC. It was clear that more junior staff often felt intimidated by DOMs, something backed up by accounts by former staff members.
- 2.31 Staff also spoke of poor communication, particularly after the Panorama broadcast. Many different members of staff commented that there had not been any adequate debrief following the broadcast.

Leadership and Culture

- 2.32 The summaries given of the views of some of the stakeholders and staff that the Board heard from demonstrate that there are widespread concerns about the culture and values at Medway STC. Culture is driven by leaders, and the Board feels that G4S is no exception.
- 2.33 In earlier advice to the Secretary of State, the Board explained that it had significant concerns about the leadership values that are being modelled from the top at Medway STC. The Board now feels that transcends the STC, and goes higher into G4S leadership.
- 2.34 The Board has seen and heard evidence from whistle-blowing letters and from former staff members that suggests that the culture in G4S is about control and contract compliance rather promoting a culture where staff feel confident about raising concerns. They describe a culture of bullying and falsification of records and unclear boundaries between staff. This is described in more detail in Chapter 3, where the apprehension of whistle-blowers about speaking out is also described.