

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 Current safeguarding measures are insufficient and outdated.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

focus on contractual penalties. Whistle-blowers and children inside of the STC need to have an effective support framework in which they feel safe to raise concerns and complaints.

- x. The Board noted that there is a qualitative difference between how behaviour management and Restrictive Physical Interventions (RPI) are used in the secure children's estate and in other sectors, despite the fact that in some cases staff are dealing with very similar behaviours. There is a lack of understanding of the causes and drivers of behaviour problems and too much focus on controlling behaviour rather than dealing with underlying vulnerabilities. The Board feels there needs to be a wider review of behaviour management policy and practice in STCs, across the wider youth justice system and across other sectors, with a view to developing a coherent and consistent policy on risk, restraint and behaviour management across government.
- xi. The Board continues to have concerns about how YJB manages their contract and monitors safeguarding at the STC. It welcomes some of the changes that have been made as a result of earlier advice in the course of the term of this Improvement Board and acknowledges that YJB are reviewing their approach to monitoring in the STC. The Board feels there is a need for formal separation of the often conflicting YJB monitoring functions of ensuring contractual compliance and monitoring safeguarding.
- xii. The Board feels that while the revised Improvement Plan, received from G4S on 15th March, takes on board earlier feedback from the Board, it does not go far enough. In particular it does not take into account the Board's concerns about handover and continuity if, following the announcement of their intention to sell the contract, responsibility for managing the STC and for implementing the Improvement Plan moves from G4S. Regardless of who manages Medway STC, changes in culture, leadership and staff approaches are needed; for these reasons the Improvement Plan needs to incorporate effective mechanism for continuity of improvement, assessment of impact of improvements, and a timetable for handover.

- 2.12 These accusations are further substantiated by whistle-blowing material that the Board has seen (see Chapter 3) and with accounts told to the Board by former members of staff. These concerns are echoed elsewhere.
- 2.13 Ahead of the Panorama broadcast, the then Chief Inspector of Prisons Nick Hardwick commissioned a visit to Medway STC on 11th January 2016 by six inspectors, the Deputy Chief Inspector of Prisons and an OFSTED Senior Her Majesty's Inspector (SHMI). Following this visit, Nick Hardwick issued a press release in which he concluded that, while the actions taken by G4S and the YJB were 'adequate' to ensure the safety of young people, he had "significant concerns" about the Centre. He commented that staff must have been aware of the falsification of records, on the high rate of staff turnover and concern about how staff behaved where there was no CCTV. He said "*managerial oversight failed to protect young people from harm. Effective oversight is key to creating a positive culture that prevents poor practice happening and ensuring it is reported when it does.*"¹⁷
- 2.14 When Nick Hardwick met the Board on 16 February, he told them that he remains concerned about the culture in STCs and the impact of high staff turnover on the capacity of recently appointed staff to cope with the needs of the young people placed there. He felt the G4S over-controlling management culture might inhibit staff from raising concerns and that the various monitoring systems in Medway STC lead to blurred accountability. He also had concerns about the use of pain compliant techniques on children and the impact this had on staff culture and relationships.
- 2.15 Peter Clarke, the current Chief Inspector of Prisons, also told the Board of his concerns about leadership and the unhealthy staff culture that appears to prevail in the STC. He felt that the DOM role is a particular concern: they have considerable operational power and there is little evidence of proper oversight of their role by senior leaders. He felt that leadership, under pressure with staffing, contractual targets and media scrutiny, have developed an over-reliance over the years on DOMs to keep good order in the STC. If a young person wishes to complain, for example, the complaint has to be routed through the DOM, so this may be a disincentive for young people to complain.
- 2.16 The YJB have also raised concerns about leadership and culture at Medway STC. In communication with the Board over the course of the review of Medway, YJB acknowledged that they shared the Board's concerns. In addition, the Head of Contracts and Business Management also agreed with the Board that there were worries about the sort of people drawn to work in STCs and that there needed to be better management supervision, even when unsubstantiated concerns were raised. He said that STCs needed to have the right people with a career path in the justice arena.

Views on Culture and Management of G4S and Medway STC Staff

- 2.17 The Board has had the opportunity to speak to staff at all levels inside Medway STC and in G4S. Peter Neden, Regional President for UK and Ireland, commented that there was a need

¹⁷ Nick Hardwick's Advice Note to Secretary of State on 12 Jan 2016, on behalf of HMI Prisons and Ofsted
<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprisons/inspections/medway-secure-training-centre-4>

to encourage a change of culture, and for people to be able to openly raise their concerns. In a discussion with the Board about why people might not be comfortable raising their concerns, he acknowledged, when questioned, that in theory overly firm management could lead to staff being reluctant to raise complaints.

- 2.18 When Paul Cook, Managing Director of Children's Services for G4S, spoke to the Board he discussed a number of issues relevant to the culture and management of the STC. When asked about the vision for the STC, for example, he stated that G4S were trying to achieve 'good citizens', not 'good prisoners', but that this vision was challenged by the different lengths of time children were at the STC for example, 8 weeks in custody for a young person sentenced to a 4 month Detention and Training Order.
- 2.19 Paul Cook also voiced his concern about finding the right calibre of staff locally to take on a Custody Officer role, in a professional capacity. It is a multi-faceted role, caring for and building relationships with the young people in STCs. When describing training, he also said that while the training they gave staff compared to other sectors was a good starting point, he did not think it prepared staff for the challenge of managing these young people when they went live, which led to high attrition rates within the first 6 months.
- 2.20 Paul Cook felt that G4S might have inadvertently developed a culture that wasn't helpful. He gave an example of the dangers of losing the value of learning from an incident because staff did not feel able to report it upwards. He explained that G4S and YJB may be sending mixed messages to staff who had lost confidence in both organisations to deal with incidents proportionately; decisions were being made to discipline or dismiss staff too quickly, when in some circumstances supervision and retraining might achieve a better outcome. As a consequence, staff might deal with issues themselves rather than reporting them upwards.
- 2.21 John Parker, Director of Children's Services for G4S also conceded that staff training at all three STCs needed to improve. He felt that a dedicated and skilled team of trainers was needed to ensure all staff have the input and development opportunities they need.
- 2.22 As Board members themselves noticed during visits to Medway STC, John Parker also said he believed accountability for STCs is blurred and so Directors are not able to exercise strong leadership and make decisions they believe are in the best interests of young people. He felt that the relationship with YJB had deteriorated and he did not think some monitors have significant skills or training to carry out their role. He said that there are too many external influences on G4S management of the STC.
- 2.23 The Board also met with the Interim Director of Medway STC, Ben Saunders, who felt the key to the problems lie in organisational culture. He questioned whether the front line staff are sufficiently mature in their thinking and consciousness to receive feedback from peers if challenged about their behaviour or performance.
- 2.24 He pointed out that although there is a training and induction programme for new staff, there is no specific training for those in middle leadership positions, in particular training in behaving ethically and in reflective/conscious management. He believed that the key to recovery for the STC lies in creating a healthy workforce. This included the need to invest in the people that work at the STC so that they know the values and standards they are expected to uphold and so that they have the support and challenge they need to do this.

- 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.