



INDEPENDENT INQUIRY CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Children in Custodial Institutions: 2009-2017 investigation report

This report looks at the sexual abuse and exploitation of children held in secure units since 2009, they included:

- Feltham and Werrington - young offender institutions (YOIs),
- Medway and Rainsbrook - secure training centres (STCs)
- Vinney Green and Aycliffe - secure children's homes (SCHs).

The Chair and Panel concluded that children who were held in YOIs and STCs were not safe from physical or sexual abuse. It continues to be the case that children detained in custody, some as young as nine years old, are among the most vulnerable in society. Many are from unhappy and disrupted childhoods. Witnesses supported this view, with a former chief inspector of prisons describing children in custody as “*very vulnerable children in a very dangerous place*”. Recent inspection reports from Ofsted and HM Inspectorate of Prisons also raised serious concerns about the safety of children in several secure units.

This report finds that the number of reported incidents of sexual abuse is much higher than was previously understood - some 1,070 incidents of alleged sexual abuse were reported in the period 2009-2017. This number is shockingly high, given that there has been a significant drop in numbers of detained children over that time. The current population is around 900.

Allegations of child sexual abuse are mostly levelled at staff and often alleged to have taken place during body searches or instances of restraint. Examples of recent allegations include, in 2015, that a female member of staff had masturbated children at Medway STC, and that in 2014 members of staff at Rainsbrook STC had permitted two young people to go into a bedroom together, knowing that one of the young people was going to defecate on the other's face, and that they observed while this happened.

The report also contains accounts from adult survivors of child sexual abuse who were detained in custodial institutions as children and were described by the Chair of the Inquiry, Professor Alexis Jay, as being among the worst she has heard. One example of this was a witness who as an 11-year-old boy was sexually assaulted by two members of staff at the same time. Another witness detailed at least 35 examples of times when he was raped and sexually assaulted by four members of staff and a former pupil at Stanhope Castle Approved School. On several occasions he was choked unconscious while being abused.

The report contains seven recommendations which include:

- That the Department for Education and the Youth Custody Service conduct a full review of the practice of placing children for justice and welfare reasons together in secure children's homes to establish whether it increases the risk of sexual abuse to children.



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- That the Ministry of Justice prohibits the use of pain compliance techniques by withdrawing all policy permitting its use, and setting out that this practice is prohibited by way of regulation.
- That the Ministry of Justice and the Department for Education share policy responsibility for managing and safeguarding children in custodial institutions. This will ensure that standards applied in relation to children in custody are jointly focussed on discipline and securing child welfare.