



AN ANNOUNCED INSPECTION OF WOODLANDS JUVENILE JUSTICE CENTRE

SEPTEMBER 2022

WHAT IS WOODLANDS AND WHO IS HELD THERE?

- ▶ Woodlands is part of the Youth Justice Agency (YJA) and the only custodial facility for children in Northern Ireland. Girls and boys aged 10 to 17 years who have been remanded or sentenced to custody can be held there.
- ▶ Children arrested or detained under the Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 (PACE) regulations are also held there if other suitable accommodation cannot be found.
- ▶ During on-site inspection fieldwork, in January 2022, there were 10 young people aged 13 to 17 years in Woodlands; nine of them were on remand. Three young people were PACE admissions and three were discharged from custody while Inspectors were there.

WHO CARRIED OUT THE INSPECTION?

- ▶ The Inspection Team included Inspectors from Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJI), the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) and the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI).
- ▶ CJI and RQIA are part of the United Kingdom National Preventive Mechanism, a body of organisations that monitor the treatment of and conditions for detainees, including children and young people, to safeguard them against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

WHAT DID YOU LOOK AT?

- ▶ We looked at how children were treated and the conditions they were held in at Woodlands. We assessed this against a set of *Expectations* adapted for use in Northern Ireland that looked at the areas of Safety, Care, Purposeful Activity and Resettlement.
- ▶ Before the inspection fieldwork, Woodlands completed a self-assessment against the *Expectations* which contained a lot of useful information.
- ▶ Inspectors spoke to children, staff (including those providing health and education services) and managers. We observed how children were treated, examined the facilities and looked at electronic and paper records and documents.

WHAT DID WE FIND?

- ▶ Leaders and staff had worked hard to keep young people safe and for the most part, maintain the daily routine during the COVID-19 pandemic but the easing of measures didn't keep pace with the community.
- ▶ There was a culture of continuous improvement and good progress had been made against previous inspection recommendations.
- ▶ Woodlands had a strong child-centred ethos. Children were held safely and were well cared for by staff. Children spent a large part of their day out of their bedrooms.
- ▶ Running costs were high and staff resources were in place for 36 young people while the average population was 10.
- ▶ There were 97 YJA staff in post including 55 care workers and 12 Team Leaders of which 20 were qualified social workers. In addition there were education, health and private sector providers.
- ▶ The use of force had reduced and there was good governance of its use.
- ▶ There had been an improvement in the planning and delivery of education, learning and skills. Health service standards were generally good.
- ▶ Good work was being done to support families and keep them involved and informed about their child's progress in custody.
- ▶ Some facilities were showing signs of wear and living accommodation could be more personalised.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE BETTER?

Inspectors made 12 recommendations for improvement including;

At a strategic level (leadership level):

- ▶ In March 2022, plans to merge Woodlands with Lakewood Secure Care Centre to create a regional care and justice campus with joint governance will not go ahead now. The Ministers of Justice and Health decided that Woodlands and Lakewood Secure Care Centre would continue to operate independently, but develop shared support services. We recommended that a critical review is undertaken of the current operating model at Woodlands that takes account of the implementation of the Ministers' decision.

At an operational level (on the ground level):

- ▶ The collection and use of data to better understand the needs of children, inform service delivery and measure the progress young people make in custody should be improved.
- ▶ Child safeguarding training needs more robust monitoring.
- ▶ COVID-19 restrictions were adversely impacting on children in custody. The Woodlands leadership team should review their response to the pandemic to identify learning and inform future planning.
- ▶ More robust assessment and oversight of when children were separated from their peers (single separation) was required to ensure its use was proportionate.
- ▶ The availability and administration of controlled drugs and governance of medicines management including the maintenance of records should be improved.
- ▶ Further work is needed to champion and monitor equality and diversity.
- ▶ Further development and audit of the Integrated Care Planning process should be undertaken.

WHAT NEXT?

- ▶ We expect the accepted recommendations to be implemented by the Department of Justice (DoJ), YJA and Woodlands Leadership Team and are encouraged this work has commenced.
- ▶ We will maintain an interest in how the therapeutic shared services are delivered and the outcomes these achieve. We will work with the DoJ and Department of Health on the future inspection of these services.



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