



Ministry
of Justice

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Our ref: 15980

28th October 2014

Dear Mr Garside,

SECURE COLLEGES

Thank you for your letter dated 22 October, and for attending the meeting last Tuesday. I welcomed the opportunity to listen to views and discuss developments in relation to our plans for Secure Colleges.

As Simon Hughes explained at last week's meeting, no decisions have yet been taken on who will be accommodated in the Secure College Pathfinder, and therefore whether girls may be placed in this establishment. These decisions will be taken closer to the Pathfinder opening in 2017, and in light of careful analysis of the make-up of the youth custodial population and the equalities impacts on different groups. As Lord Faulks confirmed at Lords Committee stage, if the decision is taken to place girls in the Secure College Pathfinder, they will not be placed there from its opening and their introduction will be carefully phased. We are clear, though, that we do not want legislation to prevent girls being able to access the enhanced provision which will be available in Secure Colleges.

You ask about the future of Secure Children's Homes in the youth custodial estate, and it was a subject we discussed at last week's meeting. While we believe the Secure College model will be capable of accommodating the majority of young people in custody, we have committed to continue providing separate specialist accommodation for those who require it due to their age or acute vulnerability. Earlier this year we entered into new contracts for the provision of 138 places in nine Secure Children's Homes. This reduction in the number of places reflects continued falls in the youth custodial population, and, as demonstrated by the closure decisions announced by the Youth Justice Board on 23 October, we will continue to keep under review the demand for youth custody and the number of places we provide across the different sectors.

A result of the welcome reduction in the number in young people is the need for fewer youth custodial establishments across England and Wales, and this does

create challenges, particularly in respect of distance from home. A key reason for the creation of the pathfinder Secure College in Leicestershire is that there has for some time been a deficit of capacity in the Midlands and East of England regions, and a 320-place establishment will enable us to better meet demand and reduce out-of-region placements for young people from these areas. We recognise that maintaining or building family and community links is important for detained young people, and that is why the consultation on our plans for Secure College Rules proposes that all young people in Secure Colleges are entitled to a minimum of one visit each week – more than the current entitlement in Young Offender Institutions. In addition we are exploring the opportunities that technology provides to facilitate additional contact with families. You may also be aware that the Youth Justice Board operates an assisted visits scheme to provide financial assistance to families and carers in visiting detained young people.

While smaller, local units such as Secure Children's Homes are often proposed as a model for the youth custodial estate, it is simply not a viable one. The cost of Secure Children's Homes is significant, and we estimate that accommodating all detained young people in such establishments would cost around an additional £100m per annum. Furthermore, such smaller facilities are unable to provide the breadth and quality of education, health and specialist services that the pathfinder Secure College will, and which so many young offenders require.

The truth is that no sector of youth custody is currently delivering reoffending outcomes we can be satisfied with. That is why we are introducing Secure Colleges. We believe that Secure Colleges represent a pioneering approach to educating and rehabilitating young offenders, moving away from the traditional environment of bars on windows, and achieving better value for money for the taxpayer.

Thank you again for attending the meeting. I look forward to engaging further as we continue to develop our plans, and to receiving your response to the consultation on our plans for Secure College Rules.

Yours sincerely,
Andrew Selous

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Cc. Simon Hughes