

# Regional Care and Justice Programme

## Report on Engagement with Young People

May - September 2022



**DoJ**

Department  
of Justice  
[www.justice-ni.gov.uk](http://www.justice-ni.gov.uk)



**DoH**

Department  
of Health  
[www.health-ni.gov.uk](http://www.health-ni.gov.uk)

## Introduction

1. The primary recommendation arising from the Review of Regional Facilities for Children and Young People (2018) was the establishment of a new care and justice campus integrating the existing facilities at Lakewood Secure Care Centre (Lakewood) and Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre (Woodlands). This was primarily to address one of the main criticisms of the existing arrangements, that there was inconsistent care and support provided to those within, or moving between, the two facilities.
2. In March 2022, the Ministers for Health and Justice jointly decided that the two centres should continue to operate independently, but that shared services such as health or education should be developed to support young people in both facilities. In addition, these services would be complemented by common standards which provide the framework for all aspects of life within the centres. In this way, those in both Lakewood and Woodlands, or moving between the two facilities, will receive consistent support irrespective of their route of entry.

## Engagement with Young People

3. Over the past decade, there has been increasing recognition of the value of the involvement of service users in the design, development and maintenance of public services. This is in keeping with Article 12(1) of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;

*States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.*

4. Within the Regional Care and Justice Programme, this is reflected through a commitment at all levels to the aim of providing young people who have experience of Lakewood and Woodlands with the opportunity of ensuring their voices are heard in the design and delivery of future services within, and on the edges of, regional secure facilities, including step down provision.

5. To date, this commitment has been reflected in engagement with children and young people which includes:

- The Interim Multi-Agency Panel

procedures are in place to ensure that all young people considered by the Panel for admission to secure care are provided with the opportunity to provide their views, through discussion with the Chair, attendance at the meeting or through an advocate.

- Service Design Stage

young people's views were sought through a collaboration led by Queen's University Belfast (QUB) which included a number of third sector organisations.

Consultation Documents

A young people's version of the consultation document was produced, along with a video, and the views of young people were sought by a number of organisations; this was supported by production young people's version of the consultation response document.

Education and Training Workstream

Views of young people in both Lakewood and Woodlands were sought as part of the early work of the Education and Training workstream of the programme, which again supported their views being considered at an early stage of this workstream.

6. Moving forward, there is a recognition that young people need to continue to be involved in the work of the Care and Justice Programme and in particular they should be able to contribute to the priority workstreams of education, health and care, and standards.
7. It is anticipated the standards will cover all aspects of life within the two centres, from initial admission to returning to the community, and the views of young people within secure accommodation will be of critical importance as they are developed. As such, the Programme Team carried out consultation with representative groups of young people within Lakewood and Woodlands in May and July respectively this year. Both group discussions were framed under a number of broad topics likely to be reflected in standards;
  - a. Coming into a secure care setting;
  - b. Indoor and outdoor space;
  - c. Getting the right support;
  - d. Education and training;
  - e. Everyday life;
  - f. Leaving Lakewood/Woodlands;
  - g. Other issues.
8. These broad areas were reflected in the support materials developed by the Programme Team to facilitate discussion with the young people across a number of key areas. An example of the support materials is included at **Annex A** to this paper.
9. Four young people attended the Woodlands engagement session, and nine participated in Lakewood. Not all young people commented on all areas for discussion. The detailed feedback

from both engagement sessions, as recorded informally at the time of the events, is included at **Annex B and C** to this paper.

### Engagement Feedback

10. Under the main discussion topics, there were a number of common issues and consensus of opinion by young people across the two facilities;
  - a. Coming into a secure care setting

#### *Lakewood*

Young People entering Lakewood in general **did not feel well informed about their admission** which impacted their mental health; young people indicated feelings of anxiety, nervousness and anger on their arrival to Lakewood. Overall, young people had a mixed experience of their induction to the facility and some felt a **“refresher” induction** would be helpful at a later point following arrival along with some **additional information on the facility** as part of a “welcome pack”. This would help answer young people’s questions; particularly around their admission, the facility, and the staff/other young people they might encounter. There was also a suggestion from the group that an **“assessment room”** where they could stay on a short term basis following their admission would help them acclimatise to the facility and process the circumstances surrounding their admission.

#### *Woodlands*

Young people entering Woodlands in general **felt well informed about their admission** to the facility and felt it was more positive than their expectation. Where one young person indicated that staff had devoted time to explaining the facility other young people did not have this experience and there was consensus that **additional information on the facility would be helpful, including information on their rights**

- b. Indoor and outdoor space

#### *Lakewood*

Young people felt there were a range of improvements which could be made to the facility to improve their experience of admission. This range from small scale measures such as **activity packs** containing puzzles and word searches, **to improved indoor and outdoor equipment**, e.g. films and games, gym equipment and swimming pool access, space for outdoor sports and equipment such as swingball and basketball; but also **access to outdoor space** in general.

The group also suggested the **creation of spaces based on designated levels of need**, for example in relation to learning disability, to benefit and support those with high levels of need within the facility and lessen the risk of individual behaviour impacting upon other young people within the facility. Similarly, there was also the suggestion of the creation of a **sensory room**, or **quiet spaces**, to positively impact the mental health of young people within the facility.

On an individual level, young people felt there could be **changes to bedrooms** such as better mattresses and ventilation/windows.

In general, young people felt there could be improvements made to ensure the **right mix of young people within each house** and **increased ways for young people to mix across the houses**.

#### *Woodlands*

Young people in Woodlands felt similarly about the range of improvements which they felt could be made to **indoor and outdoor spaces which should be more "home like"**; for example, improvements to shared spaces and **access to better entertainment** such as streaming services as well as **improvements to individual spaces** with better mattresses and **bigger rooms available for visits** with **less surveillance** cameras.

Young people **enjoyed access to outdoor space** and were enthusiastic about involvement in **maintenance and ownership of the space**, e.g., painting and additional of garden furniture and using it for **activities** such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme **which would benefit their CVs**.

#### c. Getting the right support

##### *Lakewood*

Young people indicated there was **not enough mental health support available** to them and felt **drug and alcohol support should be improved** and facilitated by those with lived experience, **more alternative therapies** introduced to the centre along with improved one to one private counselling services. The group felt the ban on mobile phones did not help support their mental health and may negatively impact on the young person as they prepared to return to the community where there would be a requirement to positively manage usage. Concerns were expressed around perceived **inappropriate admissions to Lakewood**; particularly in cases where a young person's needs would be best met through admission to Beechcroft. Concerns were

also expressed about the creation of a stressful, traumatic environment due to the actions of others, particularly at night when other young people may “go off”. Young people within the group felt that **care plans were not well known** and they did not have a say and wanted **more meaningful engagement in their care planning**, for example, it was felt that care planning for issues such as self-harm was reactionary.

#### Woodlands

Similarly in Woodlands, young people indicated there were **challenges in accessing non-emergency healthcare and community Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)**. Also, young people indicated **mixed levels of engagement in respect of their involvement in care planning**, some young people were not interested in being involved in the process and others felt there were not listened to and their input was not taken into consideration. Whilst some young people felt positive about, and supported by, their social worker, there was a lack of interest in providing genuine support and engagement from support teams was “a tick box exercise”.

#### d. Education and training:

##### Lakewood

Young people within the Lakewood group felt **improvements could be made to the centre’s education and training provision to make it more responsive to the needs of young people**, for example, the flexibility to provide one to one, or small group provision, dependent on needs; it was felt that some young people can cause significant disruption to learning for others within the centre. In general, the group felt there was a range of **physical improvements to education and training resources** such as larger classrooms and classroom layouts within dedicated spaces and better resources for art and beauty and **appropriate and maintained equipment**. Additionally, it was felt that **access to vocational training could be improved**. Also, young people supported the **introduction of practical skills** in the centre such as money management. Overall, young people felt they should have **more time in school** in order to have the **opportunity to achieve more**.

##### Woodlands

Young people within the Woodlands group were **positive about the education and training provision** on offer within the centre; in general they felt there was a **good variety of subjects on offer** and **no major gaps in provision** but **reading material could be improved** and more age-appropriate. **Compulsory education and training attendance** was viewed **positively**. However,

young people felt the **provision should continue over the summer months**; particularly due to **limited summer scheme provision** and that **additional qualifications could be offered** to their benefit on their release, for example **the Construction Skills Register qualification** which had been temporarily suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

e. Everyday life:

*Lakewood*

Young people in the Lakewood group felt there was a **range of improvements** to be made which would have a positive impact of their everyday life within the centre; and prepare them to return to their community. For example, **greater freedom** to move around the centre; to **recognise and develop independence** and that **restrictions** should be **based on current, individual behaviours** rather than past behaviours or those of other young people; with an assumption of good behaviour and trust within a **reward**, not just punishment **based, system** which is **consistent, clear and fair** as there was a perception that **young people are treated unfairly**. For example, it was felt some young people had attained trust and faced limited consequences despite significant negative behaviour. Care should also reflect the circumstances of the young person in the centre, not their community circumstances, reflective of a perception that a young person's admission to secure accommodation was a 'punishment' for the young person for being under paramilitary threat.

In terms of support, the group felt provision of **one to one support** with reflective conversation after a crisis situation/use of restraint was necessary. **Access to a phone** was viewed as being beneficial to maintain family connections and support through difficulties that may arise. Young people also felt having **support from someone who genuinely cared** and went beyond the parameters of their job made a difference to their lives.

*Woodlands*

Young people in Woodlands were **supportive of routine and consequences for behaviours** within the Centre. The group was also **supportive of the use of surveillance**, including CCTV and body cameras but did feel **privacy was important** and were uncomfortable that room searches were conducted without their presence. **Relationships with centre staff were positive**, but the view was expressed that too many staff were involved in resolving small incidents.

The group felt that ***restraint wasn't required in the centre in the same way as in Lakewood*** due to the absence of the same triggers; but that the ***restraint technique used in Woodlands was preferable to that used in Lakewood.***

Young people felt that ***incidents of self-harm*** should be ***managed outside the secure setting.***

f. Leaving Lakewood/Woodlands;

*Lakewood*

The group felt that ***more than social work support was needed*** to prepare to return to the community, and that ***social workers need to be more involved in this process***, with the potential for ***overnight/weekend stays to be re-introduced*** to as part of these preparations. Although young people felt that there was less of a shock returning to the community from secure care as there was less rigid control, there needed to be a recognition that ***young people approaching eighteen are nearly adults*** and should be ***treated accordingly*** and should ***know what the decisions are so the young person can ask questions and prepare.***

*Woodlands*

Young people from Woodlands similarly felt ***support to return to their community should be improved***; those who provide support services to young people should be doing so as a vocation rather than a "box ticking" exercise. Support services such be under greater scrutiny to ensure that services were making a positive impact and proactively support the young person's successful discharge from the centre. Young people felt ***more diversionary services needed to be introduced to the community*** to minimise the risk of reoffending.

The group agreed that ***bail conditions did not support a successful return to the community*** and promoted the likelihood of return to Woodlands. For example, young people cited the number of bail conditions, a narrowly missed curfew ensured the involvement of the PSNI and curfew times were not age appropriate; becoming an "easy target" to increase arrest numbers once you were known to police and preventing socialisation with the young person's close friends. Young people felt ***delays in Youth Court proceedings*** resulted in numerous adjournments which significant in ***increasing the risk of breach of bail and re-admission*** and therefore ***their proceedings should be prioritised*** given their detention in custody

Young people felt that ***step down*** services ***may benefit those young people serving longer sentences*** in Woodlands, they would ***not benefit those on remand etc.***



g. Other issues

Woodlands

Whilst the young people in the group from Lakewood did not raise any other substantive issues, young people from Woodlands indicated they were ***not receptive to the mixing of young people from care and justice settings in the one facility***. It was felt the two ***groups were fundamentally different*** and they ***did not wish to share facilities***, those who had experience of both facilities indicated ***a preference for the established routine within Woodlands*** and ***whilst harmonisation of services who benefit those in Lakewood they did not see any benefit for young people currently in Woodlands***.

**Thanks**

11. The feedback from the young people, as outlined above, will be invaluable as the Programme Team progresses with the development of the standards, to support our aim that all young people in secure accommodation receive consistent high quality services that make a difference to their lives. The Regional Care and Justice Programme Team would like to extend their thanks to those young people who participated in the engagement sessions, and freely gave their views on the issues for discussion, as well as the staff in both Lakewood and Woodlands who assisted with all of the necessary practical arrangements.

**September 2022**

## Annex A – Support Materials for Lakewood Engagement

### SECURE CARE SETTINGS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

#### *What do YOU think?*

#### INTRODUCTION

Sometimes adults worry that some children or young people might be in danger, or might put others in danger. This can be for all sorts of reasons. When things get really serious adults need to find a place for you to be safe and looked after - in secure care or, if you have been in trouble with the police, in custody. This is a very serious decision for adults to make and will only happen when there are no other options for keeping you, or others, safe from harm.

If you are sent to a secure place because you have been in trouble with the police, you will go to the Juvenile Justice Centre at Woodlands and the court will decide how long you have to stay. If you are sent to a secure place through social services, you will go to the Secure Care Centre at Lakewood and you will stay until it is safe for you to leave. Both places will try to help you sort out your problems. When we are talking about both centres together, we call them '**secure care settings**'.

The people in charge had a close look at how both Woodlands and Lakewood were working. They found some positives but also found things that need to change, like:

- ...too many young people are coming back again and again.
- ...some young people spend time in both the Care and the Justice Centres.
- ...young people need to have more say in the decisions that are made about them.
- ...how we make plans for your future could be better.

To help make these changes, we think that things should work in a similar way in both centres, so that everyone gets treated the same and gets the same types of help. Sometimes this will mean that the same people will work in both Lakewood and Woodlands. We also want everyone in both centres to be able to **do** lots of the same things - like learning new skills to help you get a job or using the swimming pool.

We have already asked lots of people, including young people, what they think about our overall plans for the two centres to become more alike. Now, we are thinking about how to make these plans happen. To help us, we want to know what you think Lakewood and Woodlands should be like, and how to make

them more similar – from when a person first comes through the door to when they leave. We want to hear your views on all types of things, like what your bedroom should be like, how you can get to know the people who will look after you and how to make sure you get the care and help that’s right for you.

We will use your thoughts and ideas to help us write ‘**standards**’ These standards will set out what we think is the best way for the centres to look after you. We will write standards that describe how good the centres should be at doing lots of different things – like helping you when you arrive, keeping you safe, understanding and meeting your needs or helping you to learn and have fun. These are only some of the things we will write standards for – there will be lots more, that cover every part of your stay. At times, we will check to make sure all of the standards are being followed and that everything is working as it should.

Once everyone in Lakewood and Woodlands has had a chance to tell us what they think we will write everything down and can send you a copy for you to keep. If you have moved on from Lakewood or Woodlands by then we can arrange to send you this by email. If you want, we can also let you know how we are getting on with making the standards.

#### **TOPIC 1: COMING INTO A SECURE CARE SETTING**

We know that it can be hard or scary for you to come into Woodlands or Lakewood, especially if you do not understand the reasons why you need to go there. We want to make sure that young people always know why they are coming into a secure care setting, and make them feel welcome.

‘**Rights**’ are the things that you must have, receive, be given or be allowed to do when you are in a secure care setting. Some of these rights are already in laws, some might be in new laws and some will be in the new standards. They could include things like being safe from danger, having everything you need to be healthy, having your say about your future and what happens to you, or being treated the right way by people working in the Lakewood or Woodlands.

***Let us know what you think.....***

***....about making sure you know what is happening to you, why it is happening and that your rights are being met.***

***It might help if you think about.....***

*Did anyone tell you why you were coming into Lakewood or Woodlands, or what would happen to take you there? How did they do that, or how do you think that should happen?*

*When someone first arrives into a secure care setting, what do you think should happen, or we should give or tell them, to help?*

*There will be a lot of different people working in Lakewood and Woodlands. What can we do to help young people get to know the people who will be looking after them?*

*How can we help young people to know what they should get or be allowed to do or have (their 'rights') when they are in a secure care setting? Perhaps we could give out a booklet/leaflet or put up posters. Is there anything else that would be helpful?*

## **TOPIC 2: INDOOR AND OUTDOOR SPACE**

We think it is important that Lakewood and Woodlands are welcoming places where young people can feel safe and happy, and can enjoy time on their own and with other people. To do this, both centres should have different spaces such as private areas, places for meeting doctors or family members, and areas where young people are together like living rooms or gyms, as well as the right furniture and equipment. There should also be places where young people can enjoy being outside.

We want to know what you think both the indoor and outdoor parts of the two centres should be like. If you want, you can use the pictures of an empty building to show us what you think, maybe through drawing, writing or sticking on other pictures or photos.

***Let us know what you think...***

***...about the spaces that a secure care setting should have, and what they should look like.***

***It might help if you think about.....***

*It is important for each young person to have a space that is just for them, where they feel safe and relax. What should a bedroom be like?*

*Do you enjoy mixing with other young people? What areas should a secure care setting have where young people staying there can get together? What would you like to do with other young people in Lakewood or Woodlands (or both)?*

*What do you think outdoor space could be used for? What should it look like?*

## **TOPIC 3: GETTING THE RIGHT SUPPORT**

When you come into a secure care setting you will have a plan to make sure that everyone is clear about the help that you need and how you will get it – this could be visits from a particular doctor or nurse,

arrangements for meeting with family, trips outside secure care, plans for when you will leave or something else. If the plan is right, we hope that you might not need to come back into Lakewood or Woodlands. You, and your family, will be asked what you think should be in the plan.

***Let us know what you think...***

***...about being involved in making your plan, and getting the support that is right for you.***

***It might help if you think about...***

*Do you think that young people and families should be involved in making the plan?*

*Have you been involved in making a plan before? Did the people making the plan listen to you?*

*What lets you know that you have been heard?*

*Do you think young people in Lakewood/Woodlands always get the help that they need? Why/why not? How can we make this better?*

*How many different people help you? Is this too many, not enough or about right?*

*Do you think the people that help you talk to each other about your plan? How do you know?*

#### **TOPIC 4: EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

We think that all young people in a secure care setting should be able to go to school or learn new things. Sometimes this is hard, perhaps because a young person needs things to help them to learn, doesn't like school or the subjects, needs to use things from outside the secure care setting or doesn't know how long they will be there.

We want to make sure that you like going to school and learning new things when in the Lakewood and Woodlands, that you can learn something new no matter how long you are there, and what you learn helps you when you leave.

***Let us know what you think...***

***...about helping you learn and achieve as much as you can in a secure care setting.***

***It might help if you think about...***

*What would be the best thing(s) for you to learn or do in Lakewood/Woodlands, to help you learn more or get a job when you leave?*

*What can we do to make school and things you do or learn more interesting?*

*How can we help you to learn more when you are in a secure care setting?*

#### **TOPIC 5: EVERYDAY LIFE IN SECURE CARE SETTINGS**

The two centres are places where you should feel safe and happy, including time when you are on your own or with other young people. All of the people who work there, like cleaners, teachers and staff in each individual home, should make you feel this way.

***Let us know what you think...***

***...about how we can help you feel safe when you are in a secure care setting, and know that someone cares about you.***

***It might help if you think about...***

*How would you know that people working in the Lakewood or Woodlands look after and care for you?*

*What is the best way for us to help all of the young people in each of the centres get along with each other and with the people that work there?*

*What do you think should happen if a young person tries to hurt themselves or other people? How can we help them and stop this from happening again?*

#### **TOPIC 6: LEAVING LAKEWOOD AND WOODLANDS**

We hope that you do not need to come back into Lakewood or Woodlands. To help with this, you and your family will get the support you need after you leave. This help will also be recorded in your plan.

***Let us know what you think...***

***...about helping you to plan and prepare for leaving the secure care setting.***

***It might help if you think about...***

*Do you want to know the things that will happen when you are leaving Lakewood or Woodlands? Why or why not?*

*What can we do to make sure you are ready to leave? For example, you might like to talk about the plan, have more visits from family, speak to people who will be helping you after you have left, or something else.*

*Would you find it helpful to go somewhere else for a short time after Lakewood or Woodlands, that isn't a secure care setting but you can still get some help?*

*What is the best way that we can check that you are getting you need after you leave?*

#### **ANYTHING ELSE**

We think that the topics above are the most important things for us to know when we are making decisions about how the secure care settings should run. But if there is something else that you think is important, we would like to know about it.

**Let us know what you think....**

**....about anything else that is important about how the secure care settings should run.**

#### **THANK YOU**

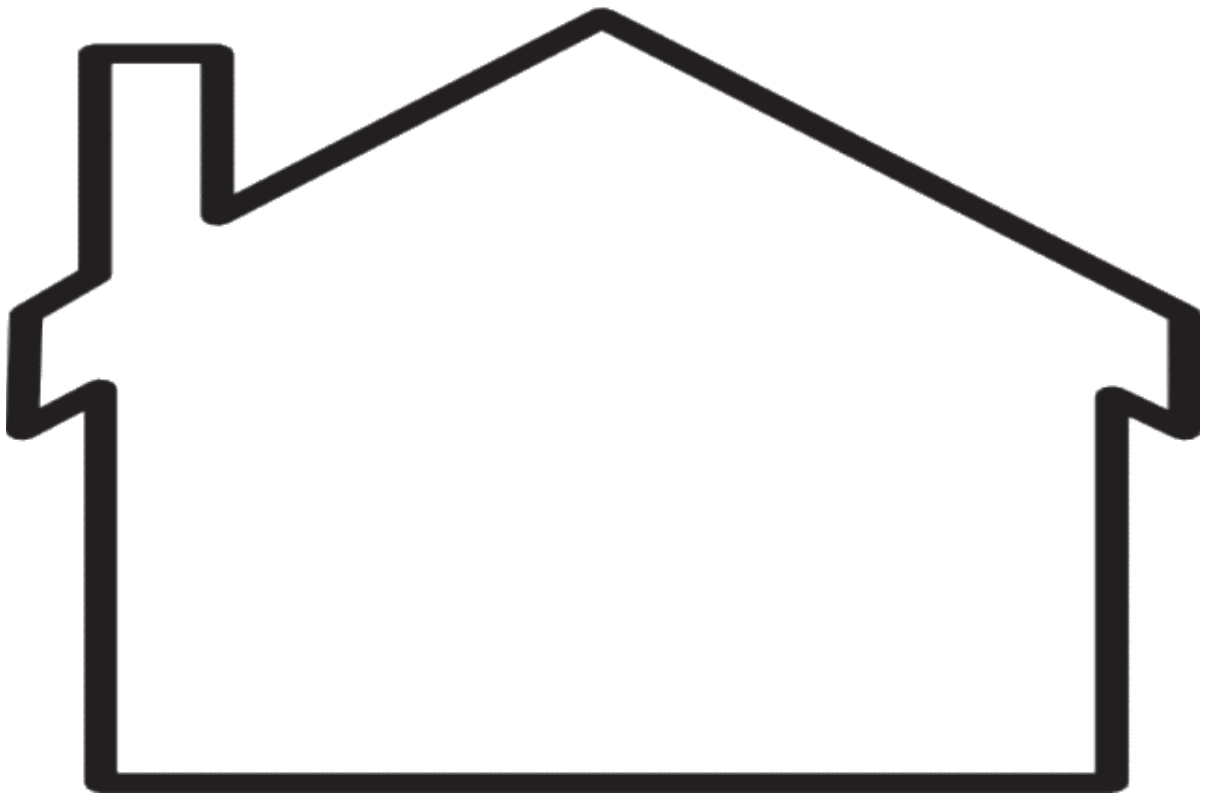
We are really glad that you have told us what you think. We will use this to help us to write the standards for secure care settings in the future. We might even use what you have told us, or the art work that you have given us, in things that other people will read. But no one will know if you made particular a comment or which picture is yours. We might also come back and ask you for some more ideas as we begin to write the standards.

We said that we would send you a copy when we write down all of the views that young people give us. If you would like to receive this, please give your name to the person who is helping you today. Please also let the person know if you would like to receive any updates on how we are getting on with making the standards.

If you give us your name and contact details we will need to record them. By law, we must publish a 'Privacy Statement' which tells you what we do with this information. This Privacy Statement is on the Department of Health website, at <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/DoH-Privacy-Notice.pdf>. If you want to read it, you can ask the person helping you today if you can look at it or if you can have a copy.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts with us!

I would make a secure care setting like this...





I would make a secure care setting like this...



## Annex B – Feedback from Engagement with Young People in Lakewood (May 2022)

### Topic One: Coming into a Secure Care Setting

Feelings focused on being anxious, nervous and cross. Not having a clear idea of where they were going and why. Feeling they had no rights.

Rights were explained by solicitor or someone else prior to admission – young people felt that this was appropriate.

Mixed response on experience of induction. All agreed it was important.

One young person was on drugs at admission so did not remember any induction. Need to provide additional induction in a few days when that happens.

Welcome leaflet or video would have been good

Having an initial 'assessment room' where young people can stay for a while (e.g. the first day) while they become used to the centre.

Suggestion of a care package/welcome pack with essential/pampering toiletries etc. on arrival

Questions that they had on arrival:

- Who were the staff/ assistants?
- Why were they there?
- How long would they be there?
- What are the rules?
- How many other kids in their home and what to expect with them (e.g. disruptive behaviours)?
- How many staff?

Having something to explain the process to those from other countries who were being admitted to secure accommodation eg what is secure accommodation and what is it for?

Reported being shocked and scared by behavior/need of other young people

Recognition that there is not always a lot of time to prepare young people for entering secure care.

Mixed experience of being informed about why they were being admitted to secure accommodation.

### Topic Two: Indoor and Outdoor Space

Would like better gym equipment

Would like swimming pool access

Better movie/games equipment, and that these are maintained.

Activity packs with puzzles/word searches etc.

Better ventilation/windows in bedrooms – why do they only have vents down the side if they open into a locked area?

Would like a sensory room, or other places to be quiet

Better mattresses

Outdoor space to play sport in, burn off energy or just hang out as they would outside secure care.

Better equipment like swingball, basketball hoop.

Suggestion of areas being designated based on level of need, particularly learning disability, as those with higher needs can scare/attack/distress/traumatize others.

### **Topic Three: Getting the Right Support**

Not enough mental health support

Need to make sure people aren't in Lakewood who should be in Beechcroft.

Care plans are not well known by young people, who feel they have no say. Most young people wanted more involvement in their care plan.

Care plans for things like self-harm are reactionary

Not enough therapeutic intervention

Too many learning needs not helping mental health of others

Would like more alternative therapies like massage etc.

Need for improved drug and alcohol support, perhaps by those who have lived experience

Phone ban doesn't help with mental health and can cause more issues when you get out

Highly stressful environment, and what might be seen/heard when other young people "go off".

Particularly difficult at night when others are shouting/banging, and then you are tired next day through because of someone else.

Proper 1:1 counselling- private not Trust based as these are shared with too many people.

### **Topic Four: Education and Training**

Need larger rooms and better classroom layout

More time in school so they can achieve more.

Better access to vocational training, and appropriate and maintained equipment

Lessons on practical skills like money management

Better resources eg art

More dedicated rooms for things like Art, beauty etc

Classes organized by attitude rather than, or as well as, ability.

Some young people can cause significant disruption to education for others.

Flexibility to provide 1-2-1 education or small groups, depending on the needs of the young person.

#### **Topic Five: Everyday Life**

Would like greater freedom to move around the centre, particularly the older cohort.

Should be an assumption of good behaviour and trust, rather than bad, with rules that support this.

Need rewards not just punishments

Restrictions should be based on own behaviour not past or other young people

1:1 after crisis situation/restraint with proper reflective conversation

Perception that young people are treated unfairly, with some appearing to have attained trust (e.g. for walks) and received limited consequences despite significant 'bad behaviour'. This feels very unfair to the young people – need for consistency and clarity around punishment and rewards.

Need to recognize and develop independence, particularly in those who will be living alone when they leave. This means experiencing and learning to deal with challenges while still within secure care.

It makes a difference when someone really cares, and goes beyond their job to help (one social worker has stayed in touch for over two years longer than the case was allocated).

Having access to a phone can be beneficial, as you can keep in touch with family and friends who support you, and have help in learning to deal with difficulties that might arise.

Care should reflect the circumstances of the young person in secure care, not the community circumstances (young person felt they were being punished for being under paramilitary threat, as weren't able to build 'trust' and leave the centre)

Need a better way to ensure the right mix of young people within each house.

Would like more ways to mix with young people from other houses.

#### **Topic Six: Leaving Lakewood and Woodlands**

More than just social worker to prepare for leaving

Less rigid control in secure care so that leaving and returning to community is not such a shock

Knowing what the decisions are so that you can ask questions and prepare

Overnight/weekend stays reintroduced so young people can properly prepare for exit

Social workers to be more involved not just "dump you at the door"

Need to recognize that young people approaching 18 are almost independent adults, and should treat them accordingly.

## Annex C – Feedback from Engagement with Young People in Woodlands (July 2022)

### Topic One: Coming Into a Secure Care Setting

Young people were content that they knew why they were going to the Juvenile Justice Centre (JJC) – explained to them at Police Station/Court

Considered that the reality of their stay in the JJC was very different to the anticipated experience (i.e. before the first placement in JJC) – it was noted that they believed that it would be a prison-like atmosphere with wings/blocks, where they would be locked up all day without TV.

The JJC was considered to be much better than expected – “it’s not like that at all”.

Considered that it would have helped to have some visual representations of the JJC given to them beforehand whether through booklet/leaflet/posters.

Most come in through the vehicle lock which was described as “alright – a bit bland”

Young people described the experience of entering the JJC during Covid and the related precautionary isolation period. Explained that since those restrictions had eased the admissions process was a lot better.

One young person said that staff had sat with him and explained how things worked (e.g. with showers) and found that a useful experience, but others explained that they had to work that out themselves.

Young people agreed a booklet/leaflet setting out their rights in the JJC would be useful

### Topic Two: Indoor and Outdoor Space

There were concerns expressed about young people from Lakewood using the facilities at Woodlands

The bedrooms at Woodlands and Lakewood were described as similar although it was expressed that more space was required at Lakewood

The mattresses were described as too hard and softer mattresses would be preferred

The young people enjoyed having access to the outside spaces and enjoyed being involved in the maintenance of the inside and outside spaces – one of the staff members in JJC suggested some internal painting would be required and there were several enthusiastic volunteers

Would like garden furniture to enjoy the outdoor space

Outdoor space was being used for camping towards Duke of Edinburgh award – young people were enthusiastic about being able to avail of this and described valuing obtaining something which would help their future/employment prospects – “it’s something you can put on your CV”

Shared spaces within the JJC – described sofas as uncomfortable and would like SKY and/or streaming service (e.g. Netflix)

Believed secure settings should provide a homely environment

Considered that the facilities within the JJC should be better than those at Lakewood as they cannot leave the setting to avail of facilities elsewhere

It was considered that the rooms available for visits should be bigger and shouldn't have so many surveillance cameras

### **Topic Three: Getting the Right Support**

One young person described challenges in accessing medical support required (non-emergency) – YP described problems associated with a broken nose but confirmed he would be taken to hospital appointments when required

Young people broadly reported being disengaged from their care plans “I don't know my care plan; don't care”

Young people described a sense of being asked for input to the care plan but feeling that they weren't listened to when plans were created

One young person outlined his view that making positive changes and avoiding re-offending/readmission was solely up to him – whilst he spoke in glowing terms about his social worker, in his perception the Youth Justice Support team just ticked boxes (“they only make contact every 14 days or whatever...so that they can tick that box and say they've been in touch”) without any genuine interest in supporting the young person

The young person described a long wait for a community CAMHS referral and described turning to tablets/drugs when awaiting services – he considered that earlier access to CAMHS might have made a difference to him

Young people reported an awareness that those involved in their care will discuss their plan with each other

### **Topic Four: Education and Training**

Young people were very positive about the education and training offer within Woodlands - “here's good; there's not much more [he would like]”

Described a good variety in subjects offered and described doing their formal qualifications (GCSE) in Woodlands

Young people were keen to undertake anything which would offer an additional qualification to help when they were released – expressed disappointment that they could not pursue the CSR (Construction Skills Register) qualification as it was thought to be of particular value to young

people leaving Woodlands [N.B. Staff explained that this had temporarily ceased due to Covid-related restrictions]

One young person expressed that the age-range of the reading material available wasn't appropriate and was too child-like. He would like a wider variety of material and expressed a particular interest in psychology.

There was broad agreement that schools/training should be provided over the summer months and frustration expressed about the limited summer scheme provision

Young people felt that it was a good thing to have attendance at education/training compulsory in Woodlands and expressed the view that "it's good to have consequences for things...without consequences it would be like Lakewood"

### **Topic Five: Everyday Life in Secure Settings**

Throughout the engagement, the young people expressed their preference for routine and knowing that there are consequences for behaviours

The young people were happy with CCTV/Camera surveillance and considered that this made them feel safe

The young people were receptive to the use of body-worn cameras both for the protection of staff and for their own protection ("it's good for us and good for them"). One young person spoke of his experiences with PSNI body-worn cameras and an alleged assault by the PSNI on his friend wherein body-worn cameras were switched off – he felt that the use of the cameras would have provided proof of that assault

Privacy was emphasised as being of particular importance and room searches when the young person is not in attendance were repeatedly described as "so uncomfortable" – young person expressed a desire to be present when searches are being conducted

Young people were generally positive about staff in Woodlands and described good relationships – the value of feeling respected by staff was emphasized

Young people expressed a desire to have incidents resolved as they happen – one young person negatively described the involvement of 4/5 different people to sort out small incidents (e.g. smashing a window)

In terms of restraint, it was considered that it wasn't really required in Woodlands because there wasn't the same triggers (as exist in Lakewood) but the restraint approached used here was preferable to that used in Lakewood [as described by one young person with experience of both settings]

One young person described witnessing a traumatic incident of self-harm in Lakewood – the young people in attendance felt those with self-harm issues should be managed outside the secure setting (more dedicated unit?)

### Topic Six: Leaving Woodlands

Young people again expressed the view that community support was lacking – reiterated the view that a lot of the people involved in support (e.g. Youth Justice; & CAMHS) were simply box-ticking rather than a sincere effort to assist

Young people described wanting those involved in their care to take pride in their work and considered they should have an interest in working with children/young people rather than it just being a job

It was considered that there should be more checking of those involved in support services – there should be checks to make sure that they are doing something positive/proactive. This was considered of particular importance for “high-risk” young people [it was confirmed that the young people considered themselves to be in that “high-risk” category]

It was considered that a lack of positive things to do in the communities to which they return increased their risk of offending – one young person described an activity scheme organised by Lurgan/Craigavon PSNI (scrambling once a week) as a really positive step to engage young people and keep them out of trouble

There was broad agreement that bail conditions were setting young people up for failure:

- One young person described having 24 bail conditions
- Outlined how some Children’s Homes will ring police if a curfew is missed by 5/10 minutes – even when they have telephoned to explain why they are going to be late and the children’s home staff have accepted that
- Considered curfew times were not appropriately set to reflect the age of the young people
- One young person considered that once you have come to police attention you subsequently become an easy target for police looking to increase their arrest numbers
- Another young person described one of his bail conditions was not to associate with his best friend – when he was seen with his friend, his caseworker in the Reducing Offenders Unit (ROU) obtained CCTV footage and reported as a breach of bail conditions
- The same young person outlined a 9pm tag curfew and having to report to the PSNI station 3 times per week – by the time he finished work and reported to PSNI he felt he had no time left to socialise with friends etc. and felt it was inevitable that the bail condition would be breached

It was not considered that bail conditions actively supported keeping young people in the community but rather considered that these were designed to “trip [them] up” and return them to the JJC



Whilst it was felt that step-down may benefit young people who are serving longer sentences in the JJC, it was considered there would be limited benefit to such a facility for those on remand and it was noted that those who end up with a custodial sentence generally get 'time-served'. Young people noted the delays in Youth Court proceedings resulted in numerous adjournments and it was felt these delays were of significance in increasing the risk of breach of bail and re-admission. Young people considered their proceedings should be prioritised given their detention in custody.

#### **Other Issues/More General Points**

Young people were not generally receptive to the idea of welfare and justice children being cared for in the same setting.

One young person considered that the two groups were fundamentally different and explained "[welfare children] are in [Lakewood] to keep them safe and we're in here to protect society from us"

There was some significant reluctance to the sharing of facilities – it was considered preferable to build similar facilities in Lakewood

The young people who had experience of both secure settings considered the lack of routine in Lakewood problematic and their dislike of the perceived lack of consequences in Lakewood. It was considered that staff in Lakewood "didn't care" about the behaviour of young people in their care. They expressed their preference for the routine and stability offered in Woodlands.

The young people in attendance considered that they could see the benefit for those in Lakewood in the harmonised approach but struggled to see how it would benefit those in Woodlands.

One young person considered that the food could be improved in Woodlands.