



Ministry
of Justice

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The Right Honourable
Robert Buckland QC MP
Lord Chancellor & Secretary of
State for Justice

MoJ Ref: 84217

15 January 2021

Dear Amanda,

URGENT NOTIFICATION – RAINSBROOK SECURE TRAINING CENTRE

Thank you for your letter dated 16 December 2020, setting out your concerns following the assurance visit to Rainsbrook Secure Training Centre (STC), run by MTC. I am providing you with a response within 28 days of the invocation of the Urgent Notification as set out in the protocol.

I take the issues you raise very seriously and have provided an overview of the immediate actions we have taken and prioritised to address your concerns. I also enclose an action plan which provides more detail on the specific activities that have been completed or are underway.

Since 11 January, the YCS, the provider and health authorities have been dealing with increasing numbers of COVID-19 at the centre. We will continue to manage this outbreak and any future outbreaks in line with health guidance. This in no way reduces the need for the centre to make the necessary improvements, as set out in the 28-day action plan, however such outbreaks may place additional pressures on delivery in line with stated timescales.

On receipt of your letter, the Youth Custody Service (YCS) immediately took the decision to temporarily pause new placements of boys into Rainsbrook and have looked to place new girls in an appropriate Secure Children's Homes in the first instance. However, we recognise there may be exceptional cases where placement of a girl into Rainsbrook would be more appropriate. This position will be reviewed over the coming months until such time as there is sufficient evidence that children newly arriving at the centre will be appropriately supported.

Despite the challenges faced by the leadership at Rainsbrook during the pandemic, I share your frustrations and concerns around a lack of operational grip and oversight, not least following assurances which had been provided after your initial assurance visit on 28-29 October. Minister Frazer met with the new Managing Director for MTC before Christmas, who provided her with his personal assurance that MTC would address the failings identified at the centre. There will be a particular focus to improve on-site leadership, and a regular senior presence at the centre to oversee the necessary improvement actions. The YCS have deployed an experienced operational manager to Rainsbrook to provide additional support and give robust operational oversight.

It remains as important as ever that children in custody have an active and engaging daily programme of quality activities. MTC are remodelling the programme at Rainsbrook to focus on meaningful interaction and engagement to encourage children to participate. The programme will be presented in a variety of formats to staff and children, in order to cater to a range of learning needs, which will be re-enforced through staff briefings.

The Rainsbrook Director will personally undertake regular and frequent tours each week with the Duty Director visiting units daily to support staff and oversee regime delivery. A newly appointed Head of Transformation and Compliance will provide additional assurance and oversight around improvement activity outlined in the action plan.

The centre has also introduced daily occurrence books in which staff will record the delivery of the programme and any divergences from it, giving reasons for those divergences. The Duty Director will conduct daily audits of the books and learning from how the programme is being implemented will be shared at operational meetings.

The limited regime for children 'reverse cohorting' upon their arrival at the centre, emphasised with the examples specified in your letter, was particularly concerning. Whilst I too recognise the significant challenges establishments face during this time, as referenced in your letter, I am also in full agreement that this does not excuse the serious issues identified.

As an immediate response, any children newly admitted to Rainsbrook will be placed on an Interim Support Plan, setting out clearly the plan for their care, so staff understand how to support the child. This will also allow risks relating to individual children are quickly identified and monitored with further assessments sequenced appropriately. The Duty Director will visit all new children regularly during their first 14 day period to ensure they have settled into the centre and understand how they will be cared for. All children in reverse cohorting, whether newly arrived or not, will be offered a balance of meaningful activity in and out of room, and including education and access to fresh air.

Rainsbrook have recently appointed a new Head of Education, who took up post on 4 January. They will undertake a review of the curriculum to ensure it is fit for purpose, of sufficient quality and suitably engages the child. The Director will also work with the new Head of Education to ensure record keeping, attendance, delivery and punctuality of all children is closely monitored.

The YCS have increased their monitoring activity at the centre with and have ensured there has been a daily onsite presence since the UN was invoked. In addition to this the amount of time spent on site by the commissioned advocacy service provided by Barnardo's has been increased. HMPPS are undertaking an internal review of monitoring and contract management arrangements to ensure that the arrangements are appropriate. HMPPS also plan to provide assurance independent from MTC and YCS on the immediate actions taken to improve the centre and guide future improvement activity. The YCS will continue to develop its strategic relationship with key delivery partners such as local safeguarding leads and children's services leaders to strengthen and assure the safety and well-being of children at Rainsbrook.

Finally, a full unit painting and decorating programme is being commissioned, taking into account children's views and is commencing this month, to make the physical environment at Rainsbrook feel more homely.

Thank you for the robust scrutiny Ofsted and your inspectorate partners continue to provide. I am committed to improving the conditions for children in our care and want to assure you that appropriate action is being taken by the provider and the YCS in order to address the issues raised in both the Urgent Notification and the Ofsted Assurance Visit report which I understand will be published shortly.

Yours sincerely

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RT HON ROBERT BUCKLAND QC MP