Strategic recommendation 1

In light of the decision of Ministers to develop a shared services model we recommend that **within 12 months of publication of this report, the Youth Justice Agency should critically review the current operating model at Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre that takes account of the impact of implementing the March 2022 decision by the Ministers of Health and Justice on the future of the regional care and justice campus programme. The review should include assurance that Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre resources are deployed efficiently and effectively while maintaining a focus on delivering good outcomes for children.**

In support of this, within three months of report publication, the Acting Director should identify and agree opportunities for the Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre team to collaborate more closely with their counterparts in Lakewood Regional Secure Care Centre to discuss and better understand their respective operational environments and care approach. This will be essential for the successful implementation of any new shared services model.

COVID-19 restrictions and impact on children in custody

2.43 Leaders operated in accordance with internal operational guidance developed in conjunction with the Public Health Agency and informed by Public Health England guidance for prescribed places of detention. This entailed steps to test and isolate all new admissions, bubbling of young people based on their allocated House Unit, a routine testing service and contact tracing service for staff, and enhanced infection prevention and control measures.

2.44 The YJA had developed a Business Recovery Plan, which included custodial services at Woodlands, but this had not been updated since June 2020.

2.45 Leaders and staff at Woodlands had largely been successful at maintaining routines for children and minimising the spread of COVID-19 within the JJC, although in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic there was little for children to do as the education provision was suspended for a period. Children had, however, been able to spend lengthy times out of their rooms unlike other youth justice facilities in England. At that stage CJI reported that Woodlands had struck an effective balance between managing the requirement to isolate and the wellbeing of young people.[15] The impact on the normal day-to-day running of Woodlands, however, had been significant and Inspectors acknowledged that we were not seeing Woodlands as it would normally operate.

2.46 While restrictions had eased in the community, a range of measures including isolation on committal and house bubbling continued to be in place at the time of the inspection and we found those to be adversely impacting the wellbeing of young people at Woodlands and their learning. This was evidenced in care

[15] *National Preventive Mechanism Monitoring of Places of Detention during Covid-19, 12th Annual Report of the United Kingdom's National Preventive mechanism 2020-2021*, available at https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/npm-prod-storage-19n0nag2nk8xk/uploads/2022/02/6.7499_NPM_AnnualReport_2020_21_WEB.pdf