



Our Secure Schools Vision

1. The Government response to the Charlie Taylor Review said that we will tackle violence and improve outcomes for young people in custody by placing education and health at the heart of the secure estate. This included the commitment to develop secure schools.
2. This paper sets out an initial vision for what we are trying to achieve with secure schools and is aligned to the key principles set out by Charlie Taylor: child focussed providers, strong leaders with freedom and autonomy, a specialised workforce offering bespoke provision for individual children that has education, healthcare and physical activity at its heart – a therapeutic environment in a secure setting. It is the effective delivery of a service that incorporates all of these principles which will distinguish secure schools from existing youth custodial provision.

Service providers

3. We want to attract a wide range of the very best specialist providers to deliver secure schools. They must have a clear child focussed ethos at their core, demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary to work with young people in crisis and exhibit an unshakeable desire to help them turn their lives around. They will be able to establish strong links with community provision and offer a seamless service both during a custodial sentence (through temporary release) and upon discharge.

Strong leaders with freedom and autonomy

4. Secure schools will have Headteachers with an excellent record who will demand ambitious standards for all pupils, overcome disadvantage and advance equality. We want to enable the best leaders to take advantage of a level of autonomy similar to that which Headteachers enjoy in Academies, so that they can create a strong culture across the school and make informed decisions. This includes the ability to set and adapt the curriculum and timetable – as long as they feature English, maths, science (including IT), physical education, sports and vocational training with appropriate and aspirational qualifications available to all – and the autonomy to decide how they recruit, train and pay staff. Rightly, the high levels of autonomy provided to leaders will be matched with high levels of accountability.

A specialised workforce

5. Secure schools will have a stable and properly supported workforce, dedicated to and trained for working with young people with complex needs and challenging behaviour in a residential setting. Headteachers will establish a whole-school approach where the entire workforce across all elements of the service work together as a single entity with a common goal, and are motivated and supported to secure positive outcomes for young people, develop their own skills and support each other. The skills of the people who work in secure schools and their ability to develop strong relationships with young people will be critical in the success of the schools.

Holistic provision with education, healthcare and physical activity at its heart

6. In secure schools, we want to see young people engaging with integrated care, health (both mental and physical) and education services tailored to their individual needs. On entry, each young person will have a full assessment of needs to establish a baseline against which progress can be measured and identify unmet health and special educational needs. They will have personalised programmes that build on their strengths and develop their potential, with the use of evidence-based interventions that help them build resilience and develop life and social skills. Curriculum delivery will take place in appropriate-sized groups, including one-to-one intervention where needed.
7. We want children in secure schools to make educational progress on a par with their peers in mainstream schools, proportionate to the length of their sentence. The ambition is for every young person who returns to their community from custody to have education, employment or training arranged, with as many as possible starting formal apprenticeships, going to college or university when they leave. Secure schools will work closely with youth offending teams, education, health and other community service providers, and with young people's families where appropriate. Planning for resettlement will start when a young person enters a secure school and be adapted to support transition to the adult estate where appropriate.

Environment

8. Secure schools will have around 60-70 places for young people who would currently go to YOIs and STCs, both on remand and sentenced. They should be located in line with demand and close to the communities they serve, with the first two located in the North West and South East of England. We will expect the providers to create an environment where young people feel safe and secure so that they are able to focus on effectively engaging with integrated health, care and education services. They will be akin to a special residential school or secure children's home and not simply prisons with education. There will be both indoor and outdoor sports facilities at each secure school, and while sites will be secure visible security features will be kept to a minimum.