

Guidance for Managing Protective Isolations and Reverse Cohorting for Children

Introduction

In under-18 YOIs, Governors have been advised to utilise powers Rule 49 in YOIs in conjunction with the HMPPS Compartmentalisation policy to isolate children and young people who are either Reverse Cohorting or isolating under Protective Isolation.

STC operations are governed by the requirements in STC Rules 1998 and occasions where children are required to be isolated from their peers to protect others by preventing the spread of communicable disease are done as part of the requirements under STC Rule 31 – to maintain good order and discipline in the centre - but with no more restriction than is required in the interests of a well-ordered community life. Restriction in this way is intended to allow the statutory minimum delivery of the regime whilst minimising the risk of onward transmission.

Due to this different legal basis, separate guidelines have been issued to the STC. It broadly follows those issued to under-18 YOIs:

Isolation Guidelines for Children in STCs

- Children that are required to be isolated due to either being a positive case or as part of the ongoing reverse cohort process to minimise the likelihood of onward transmission should be managed in line with the principle of supporting good order and discipline and a well-ordered community life. It should be communicated clearly to children that this period of isolation is for reasons of health protection, rather than security.
- The guidance set out in v6 (and any subsequent revision) of the Cohorting and Compartmentalisation Guidance should continue to be followed for children subject to these periods of isolation.
- STCs should take every opportunity to minimise the occasions and length of time children are isolated in their bedrooms.
- In all cases, STCs must continue to adhere to all infection controls and Safe Operating Procedures when delivering statutory regime to children in protective isolation or reverse cohorting arrangements and children must be clearly informed about why they are being isolated during that temporary period.
- In relation to visits, STCs retain the ability to defer visits where this is necessary and proportionate on public health grounds under STC Rule 10 (i.e. if a child is in protective isolation or reverse cohorting arrangements). These children should be prioritised for a family video call in the isolation period and their visits orders deferred. If there is an exceptional reason for social visit contact whilst they are in protective isolation or reverse cohorting arrangements this may be facilitated with appropriate controls.
- Where children are being locked in their bedrooms outside of the timetable for this regime and in line with the requirements under STC Rule 36, this needs to be recorded and reported separately through the existing mechanisms.