



HM Prison &
Probation Service



His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service
Youth Custody Service
Executive Director
8th Floor, Area 8.40
102 Petty France
London
SW1H 9AJ

Charlie Taylor,
HM Chief Inspector of Prisons
3rd floor, 10 South Colonnade
Canary Wharf
London
E14 4 PU

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**HMIP THEMATIC REPORT - BUILDING TRUST: THE IMPORTANCE OF POSITIVE
RELATIONSHIPS IN YOUNG OFFENDER INSTITUTIONS**

Dear Charlie,

Thank you to you and your team in sharing the *HMIP Thematic Report – Building Trust: The Importance of Positive Relationships in Young Offender Institutions (YOIs)*. It was agreed with your office that I write to you outlining the Youth Custody Service's (YCS) response to the concerns raised and the related work the YCS are doing, as opposed to an action plan. I am also responding on behalf of the Rt Hon Shabana Mahmood MP, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State, following your letter to her dated 28 May 2025.

I note that this thematic was completed from information collated nine months ago in September 2024 and the YCS have since developed clear roadmaps to effective practice in partnership with NHS England, education providers and psychology services in the public sector YOIs. The roadmaps focus on critical outcomes, such as safety, behaviour management and education, with every YOI now having a plan with clear performance metrics to help drive change and improve relationships between children and staff. Deputy Director of Operations, YCS and Head of Learning and Enrichment, YCS gave a presentation to the children and

young people's inspectors in your team to provide an overview of these changes. I am pleased you were able to attend this.

I am also encouraged to see that HMYOI Parc continue to lead the way and are recognised in this report.

I will now address each of the concerns and the actions we are taking:

1. The limited time children spent out of their cells meant there were few opportunities for them to build trusting relationships with staff.

YOIs are establishing co-located multi-agency hubs to work together in a trauma-informed way to build relationships and trust with children. There is the commitment across the Children and Young People Secure Estate (CYPSE) to strive towards both children and staff remaining in a stable location, with limited movement. This will allow for consistency, which will in turn enable children and frontline staff to develop positive relationships. Single communities are increasing across the YOIs.

An adapted Custody Support Plan (CuSP) approach is being adopted across the public sector YOIs focused on building meaningful relationships between children and staff.

Conflict Resolution will continue to be assessed for impact and improvement as a method of diffusing conflict and violence prior to its escalation. The embedding of Conflict Resolution Champions will also be a positive way to encourage children to build trusting relationships with both their peers and staff.

Since the thematic inspection, the decision to reverse holding 18-years-olds for longer in the CYPSE has directly seen a reduction of the population. Following a review of resources, along with the reduced population, this is facilitating a higher ratio of youth justice workers (YJW) to children to build positive relationships.

2. Systems designed to support staff to develop good relationships were poorly implemented and the framework for integrated care did not include frontline staff who worked directly with children.

The roadmaps to effective practice in all public YOI's sectors are underpinned by the Framework for Integrated Care. The focus for the first year of these plans is on building positive and trusting relationships between children and staff. The new roadmap to effective practice was developed with front-line staff and as a result resources have been re-allocated to ensure they are supported throughout their daily activities.

The Framework for Integrated Care remains at the heart of the changes that are being implemented across the YCS, I am confident that they will drive the cultural change required to improve outcomes for staff, children and young people. The Government Internal Audit Agency has recently completed an audit of this framework and reported positive findings, including strong central leadership. The audit provides the YCS with a fuller basis to further develop services to deliver effective relationships in the YOIs.

3. Many frontline residential staff did not receive regular support and supervision from line managers to enable them to develop their skills.

Guided Reflective Practice (GRP) is being reviewed across YOIs with a firm focus on frontline workers as the 'primary agents of change' to develop positive relationships with young people. This will provide staff with the time and space to regularly reflect on practice and support and develop skills in a meaningful way. This will be regularly assessed in terms of progress and impact.

The programme to develop our staff is progressing well, seeing improved retention across the public sector YOIs. YCS have increased investment in additional New Colleague Mentors (NCMs) to coach and mentor YJW. Our hardworking staff are supported through the dedicated Well-Being leads in each YOI who provide a range of national and local support initiatives.

Overall, the YCS knows that smaller units with higher ratios of staff lead to better outcomes for children, and this vision is in our future strategy. I am confident that we are on track to get things right and create environments where children and staff form the desired positive relationships that will help young people to lead meaningful lives when released from custody.

Yours sincerely,

ED CORNMELL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, YOUTH CUSTODY SERVICE