



Oakhill secure training centre

Chalgrove Field
Oakhill
Milton Keynes
MK5 6AJ

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the secure training centres inspection framework

Information about this secure training centre

Oakhill secure training centre is operated by G4S Care and Justice Services. The centre provides accommodation for up to 80 children aged 12 to 17 years who are serving a custodial sentence or who are remanded to custody by the courts. There were 34 children resident at the time of this monitoring visit.

Education and healthcare are provided on site in separate dedicated services. Both services are delivered by G4S.

Inspection dates: 30 November to 1 December 2021

This monitoring visit

As a result of the serious and widespread failures found at the full inspection of 4 to 8 October 2021, the joint inspectorates invoked the urgent notification process. This process is set out in the joint inspection framework for secure training centres.

This monitoring visit was unannounced. The purpose of the visit was to ensure that children are safe and that adequate steps have been taken by G4S to safeguard and protect the welfare of children.

A safeguarding working group has been established by the centre to address the outstanding and delayed referrals to local authority children's services seen at the last inspection. The group is made up of staff from across the centre, including from education and health. Over 230 cases have been subject to reassessment and review, and where necessary referred to external agencies for further action and/or investigation. The cases reviewed to date have highlighted a number of concerns, although these do not relate to the risk of significant harm to children.

The quality of safeguarding outcome records is improving. The head of safeguarding identifies areas of learning and development. However, there remains some delay in the completion of staff practice supervision where this is a required outcome of a safeguarding concern.

Improvement in quality assurance processes means that the head of safeguarding highlights any gaps in practice. She tracks any patterns and trends. This is very new and in the developmental stage, with bespoke 'You Count' action plans for staff to support improved practice and to better protect children.

Partnership working with external agencies has been re-established. External quality assurance and benchmarking systems ensure that safeguarding matters are now referred to the relevant agencies within appropriate timescales.

Senior leaders have committed to increasing the size of the safeguarding team to include appropriately qualified and experienced staff. If progressed, this development plan has the potential to ensure that the safeguarding service responds effectively to all safeguarding matters.

The interim director has focused on eliminating the inconsistencies that undermined behaviour management at the previous inspection. Many staff spoke about managers being more visible and being supported when they were faced with poor behaviour by children. Focus groups regarding behaviour management and Minimising and Managing Physical Restraint (MMPR) are appreciated by staff and have led to an increase in staff confidence.

Oversight of the incentives scheme has improved. There is a new focus on being 'open and honest' when communicating with children about their behaviour and incentives levels. Inspectors found that most children could only access the incentives they were entitled to.

While there was a reduction in incidents of violence in November, levels over the previous six months remained high when taking into account the reduced population of the centre. Previous delays in incidents being reviewed at the weekly restraint minimisation meeting have been addressed. However, records of this meeting were poor. This hinders the ability of managers to track actions.

In recent months, the use of force has reduced from the very high levels seen in the summer. CCTV footage of incidents is reviewed by a duty manager within 24 hours and quality-assured by an MMPR coordinator. Some restraints reviewed by inspectors could have been avoided. There are examples of poor communication and staff not turning on their body-worn cameras. Most of these issues have been identified by the MMPR coordinators. There is a small backlog of five incidents awaiting quality assurance. Safeguarding referrals relating to the use of force are now made promptly when required.

The responses to children's, professionals' and parents' complaints have improved. Since the last inspection, consultation with children has taken place and an analysis of complaint responses has been made. 70% of children engaged in the consultation. Children said that they feel confident that they will be listened to. Inspectors found that matters in several

discrimination incident reporting forms had not been addressed. Inspectors were assured that these matters would be investigated as a matter of urgency.

The dining room has been closed since the beginning of the first national lockdown in March 2020. Plans to reopen it have not been achieved and have been delayed further due to recent positive COVID-19 test results for children and staff. Food continues to be delivered to children's living units in polystyrene boxes. Staff do not encourage and role-model the use of plates and cutlery and some children continue to eat from polystyrene boxes with their fingers. These eating arrangements do not treat children with dignity and respect and senior leaders have given assurance that this will be addressed.

The children's living environment has notably improved, and a programme of refurbishment has started. Although the house units are much cleaner, staff have not always ensured that all living areas are kept to a good standard. Some kitchens had ingrained dirt on cabinets and inside cookers.

Residential staff are now able to access key information that informs them about the day-to-day care needs of the children. The information is up to date and relevant in identifying any risks to children. Staff understand this information, which enables them to help keep children safe. One child said to inspectors that 'Staff are not here for the money; they are here because they actually care about us.'

Since the last inspection, there has been another change of interim director. The new interim director started work on 8 November 2021. He has made a palpable difference in a very short period. He is child-focused and clear in his priorities to improve and sustain the standard of care and safety for children at the centre. The interim director and his senior leadership team are visible and known across the centre to children and staff.

Staff feel better supported through regular supervision that is now taking place. There is an investment and understanding by staff of the centre's newly and clearly defined priorities for improvement. Staff are given clear and consistent messages by leaders. They spoke to inspectors with energy and enthusiasm about being refocused and repurposed.

The immediate serious and widespread concerns identified in the key recommendations from the last inspection have been addressed, meaning children are safer. However, it is very early days, and the changes have not yet been embedded. It was very apparent to inspectors that the reduction in population has enabled staff to engage more meaningfully with children, and to use the spaces available for positive activities and engagement with children. The lower numbers mean that living units were seen to be far less cramped.

The centre is about to experience further change with the imminent appointment of a permanent director. While this is positive, fragility remains in the existing leadership team and staff workforce and the very recent impetus and improvement requires extensive consolidation to provide a good level of safe care to children.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
4–8 October 2021	Inspection	Inadequate
13 September 2021	Monitoring visit	Not applicable
24 May 2021	Monitoring visit	Not applicable

What needs to improve:

Recommendation

- ensure that the recommendations from the October 2021 inspection are fully addressed, embedded and sustained.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken and the progress made by the secure training centre since its last inspection.

The centre was inspected under the secure training centres inspection framework.

This inspection was carried out in accordance with Rule 43 of the Secure Training Centre Rules (produced in compliance with Section 47 of the Prison Act 1952, as amended by Section 6(2) of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994), Section 80 of the Children Act 1989. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's power to inspect secure training centres is provided by section 146 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

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