

Lord Chancellor demands immediate improvements at Rainsbrook

- Action Plan published directing urgent changes
- Increased monitoring to ensure improvements are swiftly and fully implemented
- Senior leadership bolstered and required to spend more time on the frontline

The Action Plan he has set out stipulates a swathe of measures MTC must take to improve conditions for children there and increased oversight by the Youth Custody Service. He has also demanded an end to a culture where senior staff are not visible to children and frontline staff – and don't sufficiently understand what's happening on the ground.

Many of these, including temporarily limiting the population of the centre, have already begun. The Youth Custody Service immediately halted the placement of all boys into Rainsbrook in December, with girls only placed there when no appropriate alternatives are available. This will remain the case until MTC guarantees all new arrivals will be appropriately supported.

Any children in the reverse cohorting unit – used to prevent children that have spent time out of the centre from spreading coronavirus to others upon their return – will be offered an increased programme of activity to ensure they have sufficient meaningful social interaction and time outside their room.

The Youth Custody Service has also increased its monitoring of the centre, with an experienced Youth Custody Service manager appointed to provide additional support and oversight. Extra Youth Custody Service staff will also be on-site for at least the first quarter of 2021 to ensure improvements are being implemented fully.

Barnardo's has also significantly increased its presence on site, at the request of the Youth Custody Service, to provide independent assurances and give children an additional outlet to raise concerns.

Lord Chancellor Robert Buckland QC MP said:

What happened at Rainsbrook was simply unacceptable; it is MTC's duty to ensure all the young people at the centre are properly cared for and they have failed to do that.

This Action Plan will drive MTC to make the vital, urgent improvements needed to turn things around and I am demanding they do that urgently.

Responding to Ofsted's concerns about a lack of leadership, MTC has appointed a new Managing Director for Rainsbrook. Ian Mullholland has been recruited to drive improvement and has a wealth of experience overseeing change at a number of public sector services, including prisons.

The Action Plan also sets out measures to increase the visibility of senior management and ensure they are more approachable for both children and staff. The Duty Director will be required to carry out daily tours of the centre and senior leadership will now be based directly on residential units.

A new Head of Education is reviewing the curriculum to increase both the hours and quality of the education that the children receive.

The Ministry of Justice will carefully monitor progress against the Action Plan and can apply contractual levers including financial penalties if needed.