



## **‘SCYJ says treatment of children at Feltham YOI is a national scandal’**

**Friday, 30<sup>th</sup> June 2017**  
**For immediate release**

The Standing Committee for Youth Justice (SCYJ) has responded to Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prison’s reports on Feltham prison, published today (Friday 30<sup>th</sup> June).

Inspectors visited the prison in West London early this year. The report covers both ‘Feltham A’, which holds boys and ‘Feltham B’ which holds young men who are 18 or older. SCYJ’s comments only relate to the findings in relation to children.

**Alexandra Wigzell, Chair of the Standing Committee for Youth Justice, said:** “This report, coming as it does hard on the heels of the unsatisfactory report by Ofsted into the running of Medway Secure Training Centre, another facility run for the government by the Prison Service, shows how badly children in custody in England and Wales are now being looked after. Both reports describe conditions that should be frankly unacceptable in modern day society. This is a system in deep and growing crisis.

“Children in custody are punished by the loss of their liberty. They should not be further punished by being held in such bad conditions. Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Prisons, Peter Clarke, describes parts of the regime at Feltham as ‘deeply troubling’. I would go further and say that the rise in violence, the use of unsanctioned control and restraint techniques on children, and the increasing habit of locking children away in their cells for very long periods of time are evidence of a national scandal. This requires urgent and immediate action from the government.

“Before the general election, the then Secretary of State, Liz Truss, announced a number of reforms designed to improve custody, including the introduction of Secure Schools as recommended by Charlie Taylor’s review of the youth justice system for the government. The government also endorsed Taylor’s vision of abolishing both Young Offender Institutions (YOIs) like Feltham and Secure Training Centres like Medway. While we were anxious that these did not go far enough, SCYJ supported these proposals for reform as important first steps in response to the current crisis.

“I am calling today for the government to publish, immediately, its timetable for the decommissioning of YOIs and STCs, as well as the implementation of its other reforms to increase resources in YOIs. A comprehensive vision of Secure Schools is also urgently needed. Detail is needed now if the government and the Prison Service are to show they are prepared to act on their past commitments. SCYJ reiterates the willingness of its members to work with government on this reform programme. There is no time to lose if this unacceptable treatment of children is to be stopped, and we are to pull back from the abyss that we currently face.”

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The Standing Committee for Youth Justice (SCYJ) is a coalition of nearly 50 third sector organisations campaigning for a better youth justice system.