



Standing Committee for Youth Justice

Rt Hon David Hanson MP and Rt Hon Beverley Hughes MP
C/o Joint Youth Justice Unit
4th Floor
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

22 May 2009

Dear Ministers,

RE: Delegation of budget for court ordered secure remand (COSR)

I am writing to you in relation to the delegation of the budget for court ordered secure remand (remand to secure accommodation for younger and more vulnerable under 17 year olds) (COSR). At present local authorities pay for one third of the cost of court ordered secure remand. It was proposed in the Youth Crime Action Plan that local authorities might pay the whole cost of court ordered secure remand. In our response, the Standing Committee for Youth Justice supported this proposal in principle but urged that the issue of vulnerability should be considered in the implementation. At present 15 and 16 year old boys who are deemed vulnerable by the court, following an assessment by the offending team, may be subject to court ordered secure remand rather than remanded in custody. This means that they are sent to a secure children's home or a secure training centre rather than a juvenile youth offender institution. The only circumstances in which this does not happen are when there are no places available in the institutions concerned, in which case vulnerable 15 and 16 year old boys are remanded in custody. At present the local authority pays one third of the cost of court ordered secure remands, but does not pay for remands in custody.

SCYJ is supportive of the principle of getting local authorities to pay the full costs of court ordered secure remand, but concerned that special provision needs to be made for vulnerable boys. There is a potential danger that if the full costs of COSR are delegated, YOT officers may be put under pressure not to assess 15 and 16 year old boys as vulnerable, in order to save their authority the considerable costs of COSR. One possibly

way of mitigating this danger is to get local authorities to pay for all custodial remands for under 17 year olds, regardless of whether they are deemed vulnerable or not. If you would like our help in discussing this or other ways of addressing the issue of vulnerable boys, we would be happy to put forward other options or to discuss in person.

Yours sincerely,

Sally Ireland

Chair

Standing Committee for Youth Justice

The **Standing Committee for Youth Justice (SCYJ)** is a membership body which:

- Provides a forum for organisations, primarily in the non-statutory sector, working to promote the welfare of children who become engaged in the youth justice system; and
- Advocates a child-focussed youth justice system that promotes the integration of such children into society and thus serves the best interests of the children themselves and the community at large.

Members are: Action for Children, Association of YOT Managers, Barnardo's, Catch22, Children Law UK/TACT, The Children's Society, Children's Rights Alliance for England, Council for Disabled Children, The Howard League for Penal Reform, Just for Kids Law, JUSTICE, Nacro, National Youth Agency (NYA), National Association for Youth Justice (NAYJ), NCB, NSPCC, The Prince's Trust, Prison Reform Trust, Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, Secure Accommodation Network, SOVA and VOICE.

The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views of all member organisations.

cc. Frances Done, Chair, Youth Justice Board
John Drew, Chief Executive, Youth Justice Board