

Rt Hon Liz Truss
Secretary of State for Justice and Lord Chancellor
Ministry of Justice
102 Petty France
London SW1 9AJ

3 February 2017

Dear Secretary of State for Justice

Please find attached a copy of the Prison Reform Trust's response to the government's response on the Taylor report. We have focussed our comments on two themes; continuing the hugely welcome reduction you and your predecessors have achieved in the numbers of children in custody; and improving the treatment of those children who are still incarcerated. We set out both where we think that the government's response is on the right lines, and where we think important questions remain to be answered. We conclude, incidentally, that you are well served at this critical juncture by the independence and experience of the Youth Justice Board, and would urge you to retain that valuable resource during a period when decisions of such strategic significance are to be taken and the delivery of adequate custodial standards in relation to children remains so fragile.

We would welcome opportunities to be involved in the development of the Secure School proposal; the consultation that officials have announced in respect of the children's panel proposal; and any discussions on the training of staff in custodial roles.

We agree in our response that it is sensible to appoint a single director of youth custodial operations to lead an extensive programme of reform. We are unconvinced, however, that this is an *operational* role, not least in the current position in which there are eleven different organisations running custodial units. We would argue that a post must have clear commissioner-like powers to have real influence and as such needs to sit at arms-length from any existing or future provider. We have considerable experience within the PRT on this issue and would be happy to develop our views further if that would be helpful.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss the issues with you or Dr Lee (to whom I am copying this letter), alongside my colleague John Drew, who brings an extraordinary depth of historical knowledge to the subject and remains closely involved with the system as it currently operates.

Yours sincerely



Peter Dawson, Director