



Include Youth's Young Voices Project is pleased to submit our response to the NIO's consultation on the Proposals for the Juvenile Justice Centre (Northern Ireland) Rules 2007 and the Juvenile Justice Centre Order (Supervision) Rules (Northern Ireland). This response captures the direct views, experiences and opinions of young people, all of whom have had direct experience of the criminal justice system. In preparing the response, Young Voices facilitated two consultation sessions, one in Woodlands JJC, and the second in the community. This community-based session was co-facilitated by the Northern Ireland Youth Forum. Young Voices shared comments received from the young people who attended the session in Woodlands with NIYF, who have been commissioned to consult with children and young people generally on the draft Rules as we were keen to support the inclusion of views of detained young people in this wider consultation initiative. Twelve young people took part in the consultation exercise, seven of whom have been or are currently detained in the Juvenile Justice Centre.

Comments

The young people commented on a range of issues contained within the draft Rules, and interestingly made some comparative comments between conditions in the prevision JJC at Rathgael and the new Woodlands Centre. We have included their direct comments below and have not edited their responses.

8. Authority for Detention

- 'I think that kids age (10-14) shouldn't be locked up...they're only babies.'

11. Information

- 'You don't get rule book when you come in...there is a list of rules on the door in your room...but they are just about house rules...the staff tell you: 'you're not allowed to smoke, you're not allowed to swear' – that's it.'

16. Food

- 'Our unit the best – they make us toast all night, and eggs – and they're not supposed to - the rest of them just get the supper packs with bags of crisps and stuff, but you want toast in the evenings.'
- 'Not allowed in kitchen for health and safety reasons – but my human rights say I'm entitled to a snack. Sometimes you just want to make yourself a cup of tea – you should be allowed to do that.'

19. Privileges

- ‘Sometimes when things are taken away from you it makes you crack up even more.’

25. Untried children

- All of the young people very clearly said that ‘Everybody should be together’.
- ‘Shouldn’t have to do programme work if you’re on remand – stuff on re-offending, if you haven’t been found guilty’.

27. Health

- When asked if any young people had any general health problems one young person answered: ‘We’re not getting enough exercise, need good diet – I’m putting on weight’. Another young person said ‘spots’.
- ‘The woman who does massage – she is class – if you have anger or sad feelings in your head, it takes it all away. She hasn’t been in since moved to new centre’
- ‘Should have punch bag on house units – if anyone is annoyed with staff, they should be allowed to go into room with punchbag and calm down and then could go out and talk to them (staff)’
- ‘If you’re annoyed you can talk to nurse or staff you like, one you really trust. But nurse wouldn’t give you sleeping tablets, but put me on a sleeping programme’.
- Most young people said they would like to see their own doctor, but gave a number of different reasons:
 - ‘Can talk to your own doctor – here you’re wondering who they’ll tell if you tell them your problems.’
 - ‘You would get sleepers no bother from him.’
- ‘Ones with mental health problems should be in unit a separate unit’
- ‘Ones with mental health stuff (problems) shouldn’t be in centre at all’
- ‘Depends on what they’ve done – if they’ve done something really bad, then they should be in here’.

36. Phone calls

- ‘Why you not allowed calls after 6pm – they’re free anyway?’
- ‘Should be allowed longer time on phones.’
- ‘There should be more phones in house unit.’
- Your mobile phone should be allowed... I mean what are you going to do with it? ...you can’t kill yourself with a mobile phone.’

37. Visits

- ‘There should not be supervised visits cos there are cameras there anyway. Staff are listening – you can’t talk about personal stuff – you feel awkward.’
- ‘Should be longer visits for people from outside Belfast or Bangor – Derry or Coleraine – my granny came from Derry and she only got 45 minutes’. There then followed a conversation about the accommodation for overnight stays. Young people stated: ‘I wasn’t told about the accommodations – is it in here?’
- ‘Aye my granny would stay, that’d be sweet and she could have breakfast the next morning with me. But what if my granny smokes – would she be allowed to?’

42. Complaints

- ‘Some staff take you into a room and talk about what you’re not happy about.’

‘Sometimes if you challenge adverse reports – say ‘why did I get an adverse’ and staff said ‘right you, into your room’

‘If you challenge staff – some of them walk away – and that makes me feel angry and disrespected. They should have the decency to listen to what we’re saying - if they want respect then they should give us some.’

43. Recreation

- ‘You should be allowed to walk around the gardens. I would like this – you can see out but you never get out – being inside all the time melts your head – and in new centre nowhere to go in the unit – just the one room – does your head in’.
- ‘You get out for 45 minutes football and Thursday, Friday and Saturday for fitness –but staff don’t let you out of rooms until 11 o’clock so that you miss fitness, which is booked in for 10.30am. ‘We are up from early and when you ask to get out of your room, the staff don’t allow you.’ (all the young people agreed with this)
- ‘Since new centre play station in units dropped – there have been more fights, more young people dropped to bronze – bring back the play stations.’

43. Education

- ‘Should be allowed to have choice about what subjects you do – shouldn’t be forced to do any subject.’
- ‘Not fair if you refuse to go to class that you have to stay in your room – or get an adverse – Might be you’re in bad form that day. Should be allowed to have DVD or play station.’
- ‘Should be a full-time hairdresser – one there is can’t cut hair – also they should teach us how to cut each other’s hair – teach us a skill we could use on the outside.’

48. Searches

- ‘Pat down is ok – they do it at reception and after visits – but on visits the room is very small, there is always someone (staff) beside you at all times, and there are cameras on you – why do you still need to be searched then after a visit – there is no way you could get anything in without getting caught.’
- ‘Visitors can’t get searched – that’s right.’

54. No Smoking Policy

- ‘There should be a smoking room for young people over 16’.
- ‘You should be allowed to smoke if over 16.’
- ‘You should be allowed to smoke outside.’
- ‘I don’t want to give up – you’re being forced to do something you don’t want to do – if you’re the age you should be allowed.’

56. Accommodation

- ‘I would want my whole wardrobe’
- ‘You should have someone to talk to... you need company.’
- ‘When I’m on my own things keep going round in my head...I would want someone with me...I would crack and stiff myself.’
- ‘I would want my light on all the time if I was in a strange place.’
- Things to have in custody: ‘cigarettes, lighter, radio, TV, hairdryer, straighteners, make-up.’

59 and 60. Staff

- ‘They tell you you’ve the same rights when you come in here as you have on outside.’
- ‘Staff are mainly there to care and support the young people.’
- Qualities of staff that are good – ‘Someone you can talk to; have a bit of craic with; not on your case every two seconds generally and especially re cursing; talk to you the way we talk to them; tell jokes.’
- Qualities of staff that are not so good – ‘Too strict; keep challenging you on every wee thing – think they’re here to punish us.’

Lack of consistency

- ‘Some boys get treated differently that others – he (points to another young person) was fighting one day and the same day he got moved up to silver; whereas, me and another boy were fighting and we both got brought down to bronze – it’s not fair – everyone should get treated the same.’
- ‘It depends on what House you’re in, and what staff’s on’.
- ‘There is nothing in rules about you not being allowed to curse – it is the way we talk, everybody curses, it’s just mad not being able to curse – sometimes some staff would give you an adverse for cursing, others would say ‘watch your language’ but not give you an adverse.’