



The Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede

House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

MoJ ref: 71298

31 July 2019

Dear Frederick,

FELTHAM 'A' YOUNG OFFENDER INSTITUTION (YOI)

Following the urgent question on 24 July relating to Feltham 'A' YOI, I undertook to write to you in relation to the matter you raised, namely in relation to the removal of the police unit based at Feltham.

My officials have informed me that from May this year police resources have been reintroduced to London prisons (including Feltham YOI) by way of five police officers with a specific focus on addressing gang membership and violence. A significant proportion of the work of this team will be taking place at Feltham, which has included investigating a number of incidents, including acts of concerted indiscipline, that have happened at the establishment in recent months. This work is part of wider efforts to tackle and address gang issues and violence within London.

More widely, we have been increasing the number of frontline staff at public sector YOIs; as of March 2019, the Youth Custody Service had 348 more frontline staff than at December 2016 – an increase of 40%. Of this number, 134 are based across both sites at Feltham. From March 2019, there were 90 more frontline officers based across both sites at Feltham than at the same period the previous year – an increase of 27%. Whilst this is encouraging, it has also resulted in a high number of inexperienced staff at the establishment. To address this, delivery of additional training is ongoing, so newly recruited staff can gain the confidence and skills required to meet the needs of what is a very challenging cohort.

This government takes the safety of all the young people in our custody very seriously. We recognise that Feltham 'A' YOI is facing significant challenges which is why we have taken the decision to stop placing young people there temporarily, providing space for the Governor and staff to make the necessary improvements, undertake refurbishments and better support children already in their care. We have also appointed more experienced management staff into critical roles to bolster efforts which are already underway, in order to address the concerns raised by HM Inspectorate of Prisons.

I will place a copy of this letter in the House Library.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken J. Elie". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'K' and a distinct 'J'.

RT HON LORD KEEN OF ELIE QC