

Oberstown: Some facts & figures

- The law relating to young people in detention is the *Children Act, 2001*.¹ It states that young people in detention must be provided with appropriate educational and training programmes, and that their reintegration into society as people who are capable of making a positive and productive contribution to society, must be supported.²
- The 2001 Act further states that this aim must be achieved by having regard to young people's health, safety, welfare, interests; by providing them with proper care, guidance and supervision; by preserving and developing young people's relationships with their families, and by exercising proper moral and disciplinary influences on young people while recognising their personal, cultural and linguistic identity.³
- On June 1, 2016, following a period of significant reform, the three children detention schools operating near Lusk, Co Dublin, were formally amalgamated into one campus, which became known as the Oberstown Children Detention Campus.
- During 2014 and 2015, staff numbers rose to 256 and 272 respectively, up from 198 in 2013. As well as care workers, new staff included night supervisor officers, a clinical nurse, general operatives and domestic staff, and a HR manager.
- New facilities and additional staffing at the campus have, as planned, extended the child care model of detention to all under 18-year-olds detained by the courts.⁴
- In March 2017, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Dr Katherine Zappone TD, announced all young people under the age of 18 who are sentenced to detention by the courts will be sent to Oberstown rather than to an adult prison.⁵

¹ *Children Act, 2001*. The main legislation covering children and the criminal justice system is the *Children Act, 2001*. This Act focuses on preventing criminal behaviour, diversion from the criminal justice system and rehabilitation.

² s 158 of the *Children Act 2001*.

³ s 158 of the *Children Act 2001*.

⁴ See announcement from The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Dr Katherine Zappone TD regarding ending practice of sentencing under 18s to adult prison. Available at: <https://www.dcy.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?Docid=4165&CatID=11&mn=&StartDate=1+January+2017>. See further information in section 3.1.

⁵ Announcement from The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Dr Katherine Zappone TD regarding ending practice of sentencing under 18s to adult prison. Available at: <https://www.dcy.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?Docid=4165&CatID=11&mn=&StartDate=1+January+2017>

- The number of young people in detention has been falling over the past number of years. In 2012, there were 218 admissions of young people to Oberstown; in 2013, there were 191 admissions; in 2014 there were 198, and in 2015 there were 174 admissions.⁶
- During the month of April 2017, there was a total of 38 young people on campus throughout the duration of the month. Of those 12 were on remand and 26 were on committal. Of those on committal, 13 young people were 17; 8 were 16; 5 were 15 and 1 young person was 14.⁷ Of those on remand, 6 were aged 17; 5 were aged 16 and one young person was 15
- Oberstown works with a range of external partners to support young people during detention and afterwards. Partners include: Le Cheile;⁸ YAP⁹ (Youth Advocate Programme); EPIC¹⁰; Young Persons' Probation¹¹ (a division of the probation service) and ACTS.¹²
- A partnership approach to education is taken and the purpose-built school is run by the Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB). At the purpose-built school, all young people have access to subjects that are part of the national curriculum.
- In March, a Council of Europe report stated that the cost of detaining a young person in detention in Ireland was €2,773.38 per day, or more than €1m annually.¹³ The CoE report includes capital expenditure costs and as Oberstown was undergoing significant construction during the reporting period, the figure is considerably skewed.¹⁴ During 2015, the cost per placement in Oberstown was €340,983. This equates to €934 per day, in line with costs in Northern Ireland.

⁶ See the Oberstown annual reports 2012-2016, available at oberstown.com. The data refers to admissions rather than individual young people.

⁷ During April, one young person on remand received a custodial sentence. This accounts for the fact that although there were just 38 young people on campus, the figures regarding ages add up to 39.

⁸ At Oberstown, Le Chéile works to provide mentoring services to young people (and their families) while detained in Oberstown and afterwards.

⁹ At Oberstown, YAP provides intensive support to selected young people for up to six months to aid their re-integration into their community. The organisation provides intensive support prior to release of up to 15 hours per week for 10 young people as part of their discharge plans.

¹⁰ EPIC provides an in-reach service to provide individual advocacy assistance and representation to young people regarding any formal complaints or concerns they may wish to raise. Advocacy workers meet with young people and provide advice and support relating to issues that may arise while in custody.

¹¹ Probation officers meet with young people on Campus where court reports are required and where young people receive a detention and supervision order (half of time is spent in Oberstown and half in the community). Where temporary release is being considered, the Probation Service must agree to undertake the supervisory role of the young person in the community.

¹² ACTS is a national specialised clinical service provided by Tusla, providing consultation, assessment and focused interventions to young people who have high risk behaviours associated with complex clinical needs. In Oberstown, ACTS provides a multidisciplinary support service to young people who are referred following a mental health screening. Clinicians then follow through with young people on an appointment basis.

¹³ SPACE I, Annual Penal Statistics in Europe for 2015.

¹⁴ Approx €50 million capital funding was allocated to Oberstown project in 2012. See press release: https://www.dcy.gov.ie/docs/Children_Detention_Schools/182.htm