

**RESPONSE OF THE COUNCIL FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS, AND THE PRISONS
CHAPLAINCY COMMITTEE, OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND
TO THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE CONSULTATION ON THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF A REGIONAL CARE AND JUSTICE CAMPUS**

JANUARY 2021

1. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) has over 217,000 members belonging to 535 congregations across 19 Presbyteries throughout the island of Ireland. The Council for Public Affairs is authorised by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to speak on behalf of PCI on matters of public policy. The Church's Council for Social Witness seeks to deliver an effective social witness service on behalf of PCI and to the wider community through the provision of residential care, nursing care, respite care and supporting housing for vulnerable people including the elderly, those with disabilities and those transitioning from the criminal justice system. The Council for Mission in Ireland oversees the delivery of a chaplaincy service in the Forces, Hospitals, Hospices, Prisons, and Youth Justice helping to bring a ministry of presence to those in need.
2. PCI's current Chaplain within Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre has served since February 1987, experiencing several models of facilitation and practice, including the current iteration which has separated Care and Justice to separate locations, under individual NI Executive departments, namely Health and Justice.
3. While visitation is currently not permitted due the current Covid-19 restrictions, we are aware that the interdenominational team are looking forward to returning, and having the opportunity to engage with both staff and young people, when it is safe to do so. We would also wish to commend the staff team for their excellent work in supporting the young people placed in their care, and in especially so in these most challenging of times.
4. Although the model proposed in this consultation – the return of a more integrated approach with the establishment of a regional Care and Justice Campus – has similarities to the model experienced in the 1980s and 1990s, there are many proposed refinements which make it a unique solution to caring for the most vulnerable children and young people.

5. The recent transfer of education provision to the Education Authority has been a positive development, and paves the way for a more integrated approach between justice, health and education. While there will no doubt be challenges to overcome in implementing this new approach, closer cooperation between the relevant Executive departments has the potential to facilitate more favourable outcomes. This proposal also reflects the more Outcomes Based Accountability framework utilised by the Programme for Government and recognises the importance of a holistic approach to children and young people who find themselves within the criminal justice system at an early age.
6. This holistic approach should continue to recognise the vital contribution of caring for the spiritual wellbeing of children and young people, and providing opportunities to explore those aspects of personal development, as well as their physical, educational and mental wellbeing. Indeed, a holistic approach will often combine a number of these aspects, with Chaplaincy Services using a pastoral/conversational approach through courses like RESTORE and Youth Alpha, which are well-supported by the current systems in Woodlands. The willingness of young people to come back to meet with Chaplains, alongside their positive and respectful discussion surrounding faith in live issues are all evidence of the effectiveness of this approach.
7. Overall, it is important that these proposed developments are being made with the good of the individual child, their families and communities in mind, over and above any economic considerations. This return to a more integrated model with shared expertise moving freely throughout, has the potential if done properly, to serve not only the children and young people concerned well in the future, but also wider society in Northern Ireland.

Rev Daniel Kane
Convener, Council for Public Affairs

Rev Robert Bell
**Convener, Healthcare, Forces and Prisons
Chaplaincy Committee**