



Restricted status children and prisoners held in women's establishments

A thematic review by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

May 2023

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Introduction

Most prisoners in England and Wales are adult men held in prisons, designated according to different security categories: A, B and C in closed sites, and category D prisoners in open prisons (for definitions see Appendix II). The allocation and management of men in the highest security prisons (category A) is the responsibility of a small number of prisons built to a higher security specification, making escape far more difficult.

In March 2023, women and children made up less than 5% of the prison population. The small numbers meant women were held in two categories of prison: closed and open. As none of the establishments holding children and women are built to high security specification, additional measures – under the heading ‘restricted status’ – are imposed to minimise the possibility of escape and protect the public from harm.

HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) first formalised the restricted status system for women and children in 2010, and although used sparingly, the system is very much informed by the category A model used for men. We believe it fails to reflect the different capabilities, motivation and resources for women and children’s escape potential, not to mention the very different environments and facilities in which they are held.

Our thematic review found weaknesses in the assessment of women and children’s specific risks before deciding to apply extensive additional security measures.

Oversight of restricted status prisoners, including decisions to remove additional restrictions, was undertaken by the long-term and high security prisons group director through a category A review board, which also managed category A adult male prisoners. Membership of the board did not, however, include leaders from the youth custody service (YCS) or the women’s estate, which would have added expertise and specialist knowledge and helped to deliver a more effective system, tailored to the specific risks posed by women and children.

Some children had previously lived in lower security settings – including secure training centres (STCs) and secure children’s homes (SCHs) – where they had no additional security measures applied, despite meeting the restricted status criteria. When they moved to more secure settings, they were subject to far more restrictions, despite the high levels of supervision in children’s YOIs. There was no justification for such anomalies.

Perhaps the main consequence of individuals being held under restricted status is that many found it difficult to access important interventions to help them progress – such as education and offending behaviour work – which were critical to the reduction of their risks. The irony was that they were denied such access because they were deemed too risky. Such facilities were sometimes out of bounds to them or there were not enough staff to escort them there. Many of the children and women we spoke with knew why restricted status had

been applied to them but were unsure how they were meant to demonstrate a reduction in risk.

In some prisons the application of additional security measures had been sensibly adapted to meet the specific risk posed by the individual. This should be the foundation of a new, more consistent and defensible approach, where decisions made by the category A team are informed by representatives from the women's estate and YCS who can help to tailor additional measures to manage the risks women and children pose. The system should be properly resourced to make sure those subject to restrictions can access services, including education and offending behaviour interventions.

Charlie Taylor
HM Chief Inspector of Prisons
March 2023

Concerns

During this review we identified four priority concerns. Priority concerns are those that are most important to improving outcomes for prisoners. They require immediate attention by leaders and managers.

Leaders should make sure that all concerns identified here are addressed and that progress is tracked through a plan which sets out how and when the concerns will be resolved. The plan should be provided to HMI Prisons.

1. **The current policy did not take account of the different risks posed by women and children or the particular establishments in which they were held, including staffing levels and the physical security of these prisons.** This had led to some leaders making decisions outside the policy.
2. **Children and prisoners in women's establishments were often unable to demonstrate progression as many could not access rehabilitative interventions, education and other constructive activities due to their restricted status.**
3. **Membership of the category A panel responsible for decisions on applying or removing restricted status did not include leaders from the women's estate or youth custody service as specialists in these areas.**
4. **Transfers of RS children to the adult prison estate were poorly managed and their risks in secure children's homes or training centres were not assessed or responded to.**

Section 1 Background to restricted status

- 1.1 Restricted status (RS) in children's and women's prisons was introduced around 2010. The policy provided instructions on how to manage prisoners whose escape would present a risk of serious harm to the public.
- 1.2 Men are separated into four security categories: A, B, C and D, with A the highest security category and D the lowest, intended only for prisoners suitable for open conditions (see Glossary). Women can only be held in either open or closed prisons and children can only be held under RS in young offender institutions (YOIs). There are no high security establishments for women or children and some additional measures are therefore required to prevent escape.
- 1.3 During this review, RS children were held at two YOI sites: HMYOI Wetherby and HMYOI Feltham A. Women could be held at three women's prisons: HMP/YOI Low Newton, HMP/YOI New Hall, and HMP & YOI Bronzefield.

Section 2 Application of the restricted status policy

- 2.1 The criteria for RS was applied robustly, which meant it was not widely used. At the time of our fieldwork, only nine children from a total population of 434 (Ministry of Justice, September 2022) and 18 prisoners from 3,219 held in the women's estate were designated as RS (MoJ, July 2022). In the last five years a total of 115 women were referred to the category A team for consideration and of these, 12 were classified as RS. In the 12 months prior to our fieldwork in the children's estate, there had been 50 referrals, with 12 designated as requiring RS.
- 2.2 The most recent RS policy from 2015 (see Appendix III) includes several management instructions and security measures that establishments who hold RS prisoners are expected to follow. It aims to prevent harm to the public by applying additional security measures to prevent the escape of high-risk prisoners. We support this aim but have identified several shortcomings with the current approach.
- 2.3 We were concerned that there was no in-depth risk assessment to determine whether an individual child or woman had the motivation, capability or resources to escape before deciding to apply restricted status and the additional security measures that went with it. In addition, most RS prisoners were subject to the same measures despite presenting different risks. There was no system to apply different levels of restrictions to take account of these differences, allowing those who were subject to restrictions to progress without putting the public at risk.
- 2.4 Some prison governors or directors were frustrated by the lack of flexibility in the application of restrictions set out in the current policy and had taken steps to be more responsive in their management of RS prisoners and children. This included tailoring some of the additional restrictions in response to individual risks and circumstances which enabled prisoners to engage in more constructive activities. The approach had been successful and demonstrated that it was possible to adapt restrictions to the risks posed, although it was concerning that this was not part of a national policy framework with the associated safeguards for the public.
- 2.5 The RS policy is only applied in young offender institutions (YOIs) and adult prisons. This means that children who meet the RS criteria but are placed in lower security settings, including secure training centres (STC) or secure children's homes (SCH), do not undergo any assessment and have no additional measures imposed on them. We found that when these children transferred to a YOI or to the adult estate at 18 years old, the change in security arrangements was stark. One child had been receiving regular visits and phone calls with his family while living in an STC, which had been approved by the youth

offending team and social workers. When he was suddenly moved to a children's YOI, his social visits were cancelled, and his education interrupted while an RS assessment began. This is clearly an unacceptable situation, which leaves known risks unmanaged while imposing disproportionate restrictions in other areas.

- 2.6 The RS policy did not account for the differences in the model of children's prisons, such as the far higher staff to child ratio of around 1:6–1:8 in young offenders institutions (YOI), compared with the staff to prisoner ratio in a category A establishment, which is around 1:12. This meant that staff in a YOI had better supervision of children during daily activities, which local leaders felt could have provided mitigation against the requirement for some additional security measures.

Section 3 Protecting the public from harm

- 3.1 Prisons appropriately referred new arrivals who met the RS criteria (see Appendix III) to the central category A team, who used information about previous convictions and a police report (MG5), which outlined the offence details, to decide whether a child or woman should be made RS. These initial decisions were made promptly and were usually based on the risk to the public if they escaped, the notoriety of the offence, and whether the victim(s) was known to the perpetrator.
- 3.2 Most of the additional measures set out in the RS policy had been adopted from the male estate and included:
- searching the child or woman and their cell each month
 - monthly cell moves (from one RS designated cell to another)
 - different escorting arrangements, including the use of a 'yellow book' to log movements around the site
 - restrictions on access to some locations and activities in the prison
 - communications monitoring.

Routine searching

- 3.3 Searching is a fundamental aspect of prison security, but it should be based on a risk assessment. If there is intelligence to suggest a prisoner has illicit items, or when prisoners leave the establishment or move around different areas of the prison, searching is essential. However, the RS policy requires a strip search and a cell search every 28 days, regardless of whether there is any intelligence to suggest it is necessary. We found that this frequent and routine searching was only justified in one of 21 cases we reviewed.
- 3.4 For most children, searches resulted in very few finds of any significance. Based on data from both RS children's sites, only 5% of cell searches (two out of 37) and only 4% of strip searches had resulted in finds, and none of the items found suggested an increased risk of escape. The practice of routine strip-searching was not based on intelligence or an assessment of the child's risks. In one case a child told us that he was strip-searched four times every day when travelling from prison to court and back.
- 3.5 In our interviews, while most children said they understood the need for searches to take place when they were leaving the prison to go to court, they felt that other occasions, such as routine searching of them and their cell, were distressing.
- 3.6 In women's prisons, only 8% of routine RS searches undertaken in the five months prior to our review resulted in any finds and items that were found, such as carrier bags and pencil sharpeners, did not relate to a risk of escape or increased threats of harm to others. The lack of a body scanner in establishments for women and children meant that

strip searching was normal practice when trying to detect items secreted on the body.

Routine cell moves

- 3.7 RS prisoners in women's establishments and children are held in specific cells, which meet the physical security standards required for category A prisoners. Those held in women's establishments are only located in upstairs accommodation in cells away from outside walls and the end of landings, further preventing escape. In addition to these physical security measures, the RS policy also instructs establishments to move women and children to different cells each month. This differs from the experience of a standard sentenced prisoner in a male category A site, where cell moves are only expected once every three years.
- 3.8 In our interviews, children told us that monthly cell moves made it difficult for them to feel settled and prisoners in women's establishments reported a similar impact, with one describing regular cell moves as:

'... the worst thing you can do for a life or long sentence prisoner.'

Another said:

'[cell moves] it's unsettling... you've got to take all your stuff, it's exhausting - it's mentally exhausting - you want me to be settled in a place I feel safe... but you don't want me to feel settled because you move me every three months... what do you think we are going to do... dig a hole in the wall with a plastic spoon?'

- 3.9 Some of the local managers had recognised just how disruptive regular cell moves were and had stopped doing them. While this was a sensible approach and had been approved by HMPPS, the national policy had not been updated to reflect it.

Escorting arrangements

- 3.10 There were inconsistent arrangements in place for staff to escort RS children when moving to different areas of the prison, for example from their unit to education or work. Such arrangements were not based on a risk assessment of the child's risk or behaviour. RS children were always escorted by a minimum of two officers with a radio and body-worn camera. Again, this measure did not account for the much higher staff to child ratio found in the children's estate, which local leaders suggested could have mitigated the need for individual staff escorts.
- 3.11 The arrangements in place to control RS prisoners' movement also varied across the women's sites; at one prison RS women were subject to one-to-one staff escorts, whereas at another, two RS prisoners could

move with one member of staff. It was unclear why there were differences in practice. An inability to resource properly these measures often affected prisoners' access to education, skills or work. At one establishment, staff who were detailed to escort RS prisoners were regularly reallocated to the main wings when the prison was understaffed, which meant RS prisoners could not get to work.

- 3.12 The point when a prisoner leaves prison, for example to go to court or hospital, is risky and as such, additional measures are required to minimise the risk of escape. One of the measures used included the requirement for women and children to wear a green and yellow or blue and yellow jumpsuit, the same as category A men, even when there was no intelligence about escape risk. The design of the jumpsuit was not suitable for women and meant that security had to be weakened in public spaces to facilitate using the toilet.



Category A male jumpsuit used for women and children (left) and the alternative jumpsuit in use at one women's prison

- 3.13 The category A team were aware of this issue and had recently allowed one woman to wear her own clothing on a hospital visit. This demonstrated that with a risk-led assessment, an individual approach was possible and effective in maintaining security and protecting the public from harm.
- 3.14 Some escorting travel arrangements for children were also excessive, and these measures were not based on the child's ability to escape. The small number of establishments holding RS children meant some children travelled for up to six hours in handcuffs and the same jumpsuit, with around five members of staff in a secure vehicle. The combined effect of these additional security measures meant some children felt as though they had been treated like an adult:

‘... because of the RS status, when I came here at 15 – I was still being treated as if I was an adult – there was so much security. They do treat you as older than you actually are.’

- 3.15 The RS policy also instructed staff to use a logbook to record a child or prisoner’s whereabouts at all times, another measure that is not applied to standard category A sentenced male prisoners. Greater use of electronic records and other technology would have provided more effective monitoring.

Restricted access to certain areas in the establishment

- 3.16 Many areas of the prison were out of bounds for RS prisoners. For example, RS children at Feltham were unable to use the outside football sports pitch. Prison leaders in the children’s estate described this measure as over-restrictive and told us that they were suitably equipped to manage and mitigate risks locally with ongoing monitoring checks by the national category A team if deemed necessary.
- 3.17 In the women’s estate, prisoners at Low Newton were unable to live on the psychologically informed planned environment unit (PIPE, see Glossary) and so were prevented from accessing this service. There was a need for leaders in the long-term high secure estate, youth custody service (YCS) and women’s estate to investigate how to provide access to key rehabilitative services while minimising the risk of escape.

Communications monitoring

- 3.18 Communications monitoring can be a vital tool in gathering evidence of an increase in risks or a continuing threat to the public. Telephone and mail monitoring arrangements were in the process of being reviewed at the sites we visited because of the new authorised communications controls and interceptions (ACCI, see Glossary) policy which had removed the requirement to monitor all RS communications and had adopted an individualised and risk-assessed model.
- 3.19 Following the introduction of the new policy, women’s prisons only monitored RS individuals following a risk assessment. However, at one children’s site all monitoring had been stopped and we could not find evidence that this decision would be reviewed following a significant change in circumstances, such as a move to hospital or court appearances.

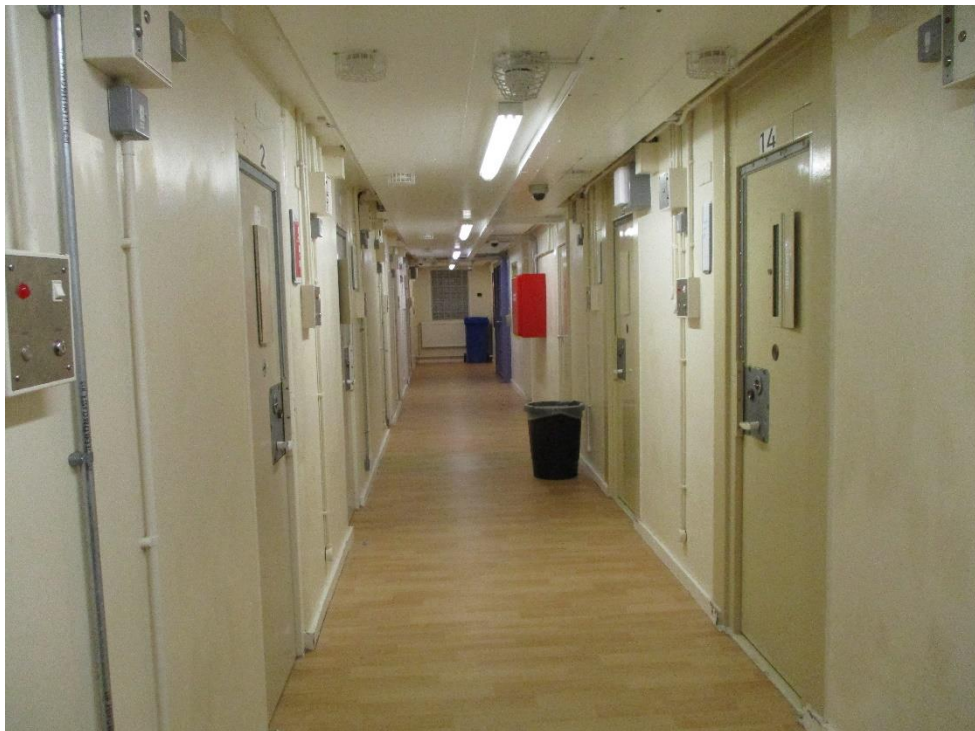
Section 4 Access to services and support

Daily life

- 4.1 The first 28 days in custody for all RS children at Wetherby was spent on one unit, which was separate from the main population. During this time, the prison completed a local assessment management plan (LAMP) which included checks on telephone PIN contacts and family or friends who wanted to visit the child in prison. It was unclear why this lengthy assessment period was necessary in most cases, and we found that spending almost a month on one unit impacted negatively on children's ability to maintain contact with family and friends, delayed their access to education and also affected their well-being.
- 4.2 While prisons tried to facilitate family contact as soon as possible, this often relied on the police completing visits to the community under the approved visitors' scheme (AVS – see glossary) and there was no acknowledgement of other children's organisations (such as the youth offending team or children's social care) which had already approved contact with visitors; this was a gap in information sharing.
- 4.3 In our interviews, some children told us that their daily life and experience was different to those who lived on the main units. They said they had less time out of cell, a poorer living environment and reduced access to opportunities such as sports and education. The RS unit at Wetherby was old, claustrophobic and confined, with a lack of natural light. Communal showers on the unit were poorly maintained and mouldy.

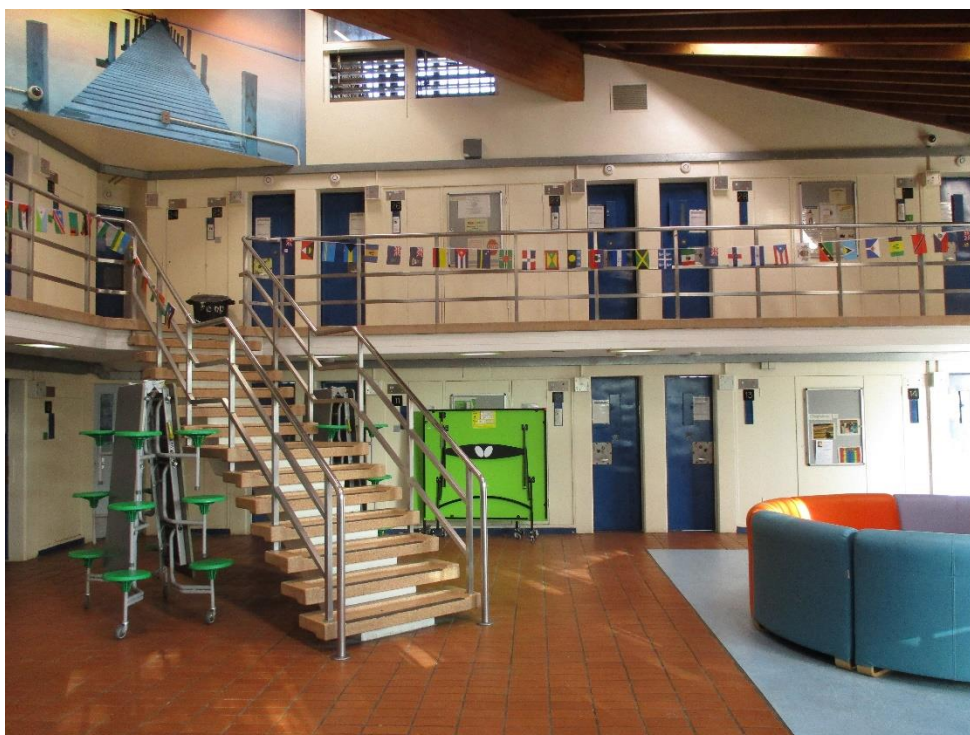


Child's cell on RS unit



RS unit corridor

- 4.4 There were RS cells on different units at Feltham. If an RS child achieved enhanced status (awarded for good behaviour within the YOI's incentives scheme), they could live on the enhanced unit which provided a better environment, with showers in cell and more opportunities to mix with their peers.



Living conditions on the enhanced unit at Feltham

- 4.5 Most RS children spent long periods locked in their cells. The 28-day assessment meant that children's access to activities, association with peers and meaningful contact with staff was very limited during this time. This did not improve after the assessment was over, as restrictions still impacted on time out of cell. Managers were trying to deliver around two hours out of cell during the week, but some children in our sample received far less.
- 4.6 One RS child had been in custody for 49 days and his planned activities were limited to a shower, around 30 minutes exercise and sometimes on-wing education. In this time, he had only left the designated RS unit twice and he had no time out of cell for any reason on seven days in the previous month, which amounted to solitary confinement (more than 22 hours locked in a cell without any meaningful human interaction).
- 4.7 During our interviews children said they struggled with the length of time locked up on one unit. Recordings on the prison-based information system (NOMIS) supported this, with some professionals commenting that spending long periods of time locked up was having a negative impact on children's well-being and mental health.
- 4.8 The day-to-day experience for RS prisoners in women's establishments varied across the three prisons. At one site, prisoners could not attend

work because staff required to escort them were regularly reallocated, so they were locked up for long periods during the day. However, at another site, leaders had completed a local risk assessment which allowed one older woman to have her cell door unlocked during the day, giving her access to the communal areas on the unit. At the same establishment, time out of cell for RS prisoners during the week was reasonable and no different to their non-RS counterparts.

- 4.9 Living conditions for RS prisoners in women's establishments were notably different. There were clear benefits to the environment and staffing arrangements on the Rivendell Unit at HMP New Hall and RS prisoners living there had a generally positive experience. One prisoner had demonstrated a marked improvement in presentation and insight into risk and another was benefitting from the positive environment and consistency of staff working on the unit. Living conditions at Bronzefield were also reasonable. Many of the RS women lived on one houseblock which was dedicated to long-term prisoners and had an association room, in-cell showers and telephones.



Prisoner's cell at Bronzefield



Communal areas at Bronzefield

Family contact

- 4.10 RS children often experienced delays in contacting family and friends which were longer than for children who were not RS. When asked to describe family contact, one RS child compared his experience to non-RS children and said it was:

‘... harder... way harder.’

- 4.11 For another child, it took around six weeks for a visitor to be approved for social visits and in a different case, a child only received photographs of siblings and family members after about a month. When asked about this delay the child said:

‘... my mum sent colouring books yeah... and a picture of my little brother and sister and it took about 3-4 weeks for that picture to get to me.’

- 4.12 The experience and availability of social visits was also different for RS children. Children on remand are entitled to three hour-long social visits a week and sentenced children are entitled to two hour-long social visits a month. However, at Wetherby only two RS children were allowed in the main visits hall at any time, which significantly reduced their access and meant children on remand would not be able to access their entitlement of three visits a week. This lack of contact with family was further exacerbated by most RS children being held much further away from home than their peers. In our sample, on average RS children were held 142 miles away and one child was 309 miles from

his home area. This also meant that children received limited support from professionals, including youth offending teams and social workers, who were less likely to visit the prison.

- 4.13 In the women's establishments, some RS prisoners also experienced delays in being able to contact family and friends in the early days of custody due to the time it took for them to be checked by the police and approved before entering the prison (AVS). Distance from home was also problematic for some in women's prisons and the introduction of video calls was really valued. New Hall had helped to facilitate family contact for two RS women; their social visits took place on the unit away from the main visits hall. This arrangement safeguarded these prisoners and meant that social visits could take place in a safe and supportive environment. Without these procedures it was unlikely that the women would have received social visits.

Education, skills and work

- 4.14 We found that it took twice the amount of time for RS children to be allocated to education when they arrived in custody than their peers. This delay was caused by the 28-day assessment period. Three out of nine children in our sample were not engaged in education and in some instances, even when education was available this was not specific to their needs. For example, one child was watching videos about choosing a college or apprenticeship when he had a further 16 years to serve on his life tariff. In our interviews, children shared that they valued education and felt frustrated when it was cancelled, sometimes due to a lack of staff to escort them to classes.
- 4.15 In the women's establishments, 15 of the RS prisoners were in education, skills or work. At Bronzefield, some women were working on the wing and others were employed in other positions such as peer workers in the gym. In our interviews, RS prisoners were positive about this, and we found no evidence to suggest that this compromised security in any way. In one case, a risk assessment had allowed one woman to be able to use equipment for gardening while supervised by staff. This decision was proportionate to the risks of the individual and had been made on the basis that there had been no indication of threats or intelligence around weapons in the last 12 months. Such an arrangement was another example of how local and individual assessments could be effective in managing risk while allowing RS prisoners to engage in a more constructive and meaningful regime.
- 4.16 This was not the case for all of the women's establishments and at one site, access to off-wing work was regularly cancelled due to insufficient staff to facilitate RS moves. This meant that some prisoners settled for on-wing work such as cleaning or laundry, which did little to help them demonstrate progress when their RS status was reviewed.

Relationships with staff

- 4.17 RS children described generally positive relationships with staff and said the regular support from resettlement practitioners was especially

helpful. All children in our interviews could identify a member of staff they could turn to if they had a problem. At Wetherby, we found evidence of good support from the chaplaincy team who had helped two RS children to continue to practice their religion; this support also involved their family once the assessment period had ended. Most RS prisoners in women's establishments described good relationships with their probation offender manager (POM), especially at Low Newton and New Hall.

- 4.18 The support available to RS prisoners in women's establishments from key workers was important. All of those in our sample had a key worker and we assessed that they provided meaningful support and input for prisoners in all but two cases. At New Hall we said that 'sessions take place regularly with the same named keyworker... there is evidence of trust within that relationship and encouragement.' In our interviews, prisoners were especially positive about the key work model at Bronzefield, where a dedicated team of officers who worked in the security department and were knowledgeable about the issues facing those who were RS, provided the sessions. When asked to describe why this model was helpful one woman said:

'... you have a port of call... as an RS inmate you have specific people you can go to for answers to questions.'

Health care for prisoners in women's establishments

- 4.19 Most women had access to health care that was equivalent to the main population. RS women who arrived were assessed and managed closely, and further assessments were put in place when they needed them. There was an appropriate focus on RS women who had a high level of health care needs and care was planned and delivered to meet them.
- 4.20 Our review did not highlight any difference in accessing health services through the normal appointment pathways for RS prisoners. Long-term condition care and access to specific women's health and screening was not always in line with expected standards but was the same as for other prisoners at that site. At Bronzefield, it was not routine for women on RS to be escorted by officers into clinical consultations, which meant that appointments were confidential. In our interviews, prisoners were generally positive about confidentiality during health care consultations and appointments.
- 4.21 At Bronzefield, access to mental health services was prompt, mental health care was good, and it was equal to that of other prisoners. Mental health assessments were timely, and those women identified as requiring ongoing assessment, treatment and intervention received care that was appropriate and in line with other patients. We found that where a woman's mental health had deteriorated or was considered to require assessment for admission to a secure mental health hospital,

referral and assessment took place within the national guidelines, which was better than we usually see.

- 4.22 However, the wait for transfer to a specialist mental health hospital had the potential to be more problematic than normal given the restrictions and the additional security requirements, such as accessing high secure transport. We found one patient who had waited 128 days for a transfer due to her RS which potentially delayed their recovery.

Section 5 Risk reduction and transitions

Children transferring to the adult estate

- 5.1 At the children's sites, we found that for four out of nine children it was not clear what they needed to do to reduce their level of risk. In the poorest example there was no Asset assessment (see Glossary) of the child to inform the sentence plan, and despite sentence or remand planning targets in the better examples, they were mostly focused on well-being. This made it difficult to evidence a reduction in risk before a review of restricted status. In the few cases where there was evidence of risk reduction work, this was not accounted for in a review of RS status or as a key part of the decision-making process when the child moved to the adult estate.
- 5.2 Until some recent changes, there had been a longstanding absence of a clear transition process for RS children to move to the adult estate. This meant most had moved with no prior information about their new establishment with no time to prepare. The standard YCS placements policy to not transfer children on or around their 18th birthday or at Christmas, recognising that this is a vulnerable time for most of them, did not apply to RS children. One child transferred from one YOI to another on Christmas eve, and another was sent to the adult estate prison on their 18th birthday. Resettlement practitioners working with RS children described their concerns about the lack of information they could share with children about their future placements and frustrations with the system.
- 5.3 In an attempt to address these issues, Wetherby had recently formed a new transition process alongside the YCS placements and category A team which focused on improving relationships between the prison and two specific adult category A prisons (Manchester and Belmarsh) to which young adults could be transferred. This was starting to improve the information children received before they moved and had enabled young adults to gain quicker access to PIN phone contacts and approved visits during their early days in the adult estate. Some young adults had been offered a phone call with staff at the adult site before they were transferred. During our interviews, one young adult commented on the difference a phone call with the new establishment had made:

'I'm feeling a lot better than I was before I spoke to someone [from the adult prison site]... I remember when I just got told I was going there and hadn't spoke to anyone it was a bit like what's going to happen? But now I know at least what's going to happen when I get there straight away and then I can get settled in and go from there.'

- 5.4 However, there remained issues with this process; both adult establishments could still be a significant distance from home areas

and did not always offer the specific offending behaviour interventions required.

- 5.5 We also found that risk reduction work undertaken in children's settings, which included educational achievements, was not considered effectively enough when deciding whether RS was necessary, when the child transitioned to the adult estate, or what additional security measures were required.

Progression in women's prisons

- 5.6 We were concerned that, in our view, only 11 out of 18 risk of serious harm assessments were accurate and only two thirds clearly set out what the prisoner needed to do to reduce their risk. The lack of clarity about what was understood to be successful risk reduction work for women was a big problem and there was a disconnect between what women's prisons and the national category A team viewed as effective. Unlike the male estate where there were several recognised and approved offending behaviour programmes, there was a lack of good evidence about what worked with women and children, and even local psychologically-informed initiatives such as the EOS programme (see Glossary) at Bronzefield had not been recognised as relevant until very recently.
- 5.7 This was the case for one prisoner in our sample who had completed four years on a specialist unit which delivered intensive treatment for high-risk individuals. However, their restricted status hindered their progression as it prevented access to the next step; they were unable to move on to the PIPE unit as it did not meet the physical security requirements for RS prisoners as set by the category A team. Despite completing all that had been requested of them at the prison, and a recommendation to remove RS supported by a psychological risk assessment which evidenced risk reduction, this was refused by the national panel. More needed to be done to make sure reviews were fully informed by specialists working in these areas, such as those from the women's estate and YCS, and that they were formally part of the membership of the review board.
- 5.8 This was not the only example where restricted status had hindered progression. We were also aware of previous examples of RS women transferring to a different establishment to access a therapeutic community as part of risk reduction work, but once there, they were unable to live on the unit due to their RS status. This left them feeling confused and hopeless, and they found themselves in a catch-22 situation. With a lack of realistic and achievable targets, some RS prisoners were at a loss as to what more they could do with their time in custody, and many were unclear about what to do next. One prisoner said:

'I've had my moments, but so has every prisoner, and some have bigger ones than I do. And I have tried so hard, I toe the line, I do as I'm told. I'm polite, I'm courteous. And it's just not enough. And I just feel like giving up... I try to be polite and respectful but it's getting me nowhere.'

Another also said:

'... we are told there is not enough evidence to come off RS but there was nothing about what would be enough?'

Section 6 Reviews of restricted status

- 6.1 Each child or woman confirmed as RS should have their security category reviewed two years after sentencing, and thereafter annually. For each review, a local assessment panel (LAP) within the prison should submit a report with a recommendation about whether the evidence they have about the child or prisoner supports a continuation of RS or removal. If the LAP recommends removal of RS, this must be approved by the national panel chair (DDC).
- 6.2 There were two RS children in our sample who were eligible for reviews of their RS status. In one of the cases, the documentation used for the review was not of sufficiently good quality and did not contain enough information from a range of sources. Instead, the prison provided the core documents which had been requested from the category A team, such as court transcripts. There was no information from the resettlement practitioner, education department or YOT who were working with the child. Children received the outcome of the review via a letter which contained limited information about the reasons behind the decision, other than a reference to the index offence.
- 6.3 Some prisoners held in women's establishments had spent many years being RS. We found that local reviews of their RS status did not always happen annually. All RS prisoners in our sample who should have had an annual local review had experienced gaps of longer than 12 months between each one (apart from a two-year post-sentence review) and of the most recent reviews that had taken place, only a third were held on time. This meant that the national review process was also delayed.
- 6.4 When LAPs happened, they were usually well attended by a range of professionals. For example, at Bronzefield reviews were multi-disciplinary, chaired by the deputy director and attended by the head of security, POM, key worker and a member of the women's estate psychology service (WEPS). Inspectors judged that the contributions made to the reviews at the three sites were generally meaningful in all but two cases. However, very few (six out of 15) prisoners had any involvement in their review. At one site RS prisoners described having little knowledge, input or information about their reviews, while those at New Hall and Bronzefield reported that they were kept up to date, with the RS key work team in particular providing prisoners with a useful point of contact.
- 6.5 RS reviews were not informed by up-to-date assessments of risk and need (OASys) and in one example, local and national reviews of RS had been based on an assessment that was over three years old.
- 6.6 Very few prisoners in women's establishments had been downgraded from RS, even when there had been no intelligence or information about their potential to escape. In the three years before our inspection three women had been deemed suitable to have their RS removed.

The national panel meetings we attended were well organised, but the board membership did not formally include representatives from the youth custody service (YCS) for children or women's directorate. Their specialist knowledge would have helped when considering the different risks and needs posed.

- 6.7 Finally, there was no step-down or gradual reintegration model as part of the removal of RS to encourage progression and test the prisoner's behaviour. This meant that some prisoners who had had their RS removed very close to their release date or the date they became eligible for parole did not have sufficient opportunities to demonstrate their behaviour or be monitored under less restricted conditions.

Appendix I Thematic methodology

We interviewed all nine RS children and spoke to 21 prisoners held in women's establishments (18 were RS and the remaining three women had recently had RS status removed). We asked questions about the child or prisoner's experiences of restricted status. We also reviewed documentation and assessments and spoke with caseworkers, resettlement practitioners, probation and prison offender managers, as well as leaders in the security, psychology and offender management departments. At the largest of the women's prisons, health care inspectors also completed an in-depth review of restricted status prisoners' access to health care services.

In our sample of children, seven of the nine were on remand and two were sentenced. The length of time spent as RS for children ranged from around one month to almost two years at the time of our review. Of those held in women's establishments, three were on remand and 15 were sentenced. The length of time these prisoners had spent as RS ranged from around one month to 27 years.

Appendix II Glossary

Asset or AssetPlus

The Youth Justice Board's (YJB) end-to-end assessment and planning framework. It aims to provide a single record for each child involved in the youth justice system, whether in the community or custody.

Authorised Communications Controls and Interception (ACCI) 2022

The most recent rules and guidance for prison staff to manage communications controls and interception across prisons and Young Offenders Institutions.

Approved visitors scheme (AVS)

Visitors to Category A prisoners must be security checked by the police and approved prior to entering the prison grounds, which means their visit will likely be delayed.

EOS programme

Offender Personality Disorder (OPD) Service at HMP Bronzefield that works with high-risk women, who have been 'stuck' in terms of sentence progression. It works closely with the staff and prisoners to facilitate consistent care and explore goals that work towards progression.

The Identification, Initial Categorisation and Management of Potential and Provisional Category A / Restricted Status Prisoners PSI 09/2015

See:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1105418/psi-09-2015.pdf

Prison security categories

Male prisons are organised into four categories (Ministry of Justice, 2022):

- **Category A**
These are high security prisons overseen by the Long Term High Secure Estate (LTHSE) They house male prisoners who, if they were to escape, pose the most threat to the public, the police or national security.
- **Category B**
These prisons are either local or training prisons. Local prisons house prisoners that are taken directly from court in the local area (sentenced or on remand), and training prisons hold long-term and high-security prisoners.
- **Category C**
These prisons are training and resettlement prisons; most prisoners are located in a category C. They provide prisoners with the opportunity to develop their own skills so they can find work and resettle back into the community on release.
- **Category D - open prisons**
These prisons have minimal security and allow eligible prisoners to spend most of their day away from the prison on licence to carry out work,

education or for other resettlement purposes. Open prisons only house prisoners that have been risk-assessed and deemed suitable for open conditions.

Psychologically Informed Planned Environment (PIPE)

PIPEs are one intervention offered as part of the Offender Personality Disorder pathway in prisons and in Probation Approved Premises in the community. They are designed to support the transition and progression of prisoners and people on probation at significant stages of their sentence and beyond. Staff who work in PIPEs are trained and supported to work in an evidence based psychologically informed way.

Solitary confinement

More than 22 hours locked in a cell without any meaningful human interaction.

Appendix III Restricted status offences

Where a prisoner is received into custody charged with one of the offences below, prison staff must contact the police officer in charge of the case who will provide a case summary. This information is then used to report the case to the central category A team who will make a decision about whether the woman or child is restricted status.

Offence Type	Offences	Indicative of consideration for Category A
Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Murder • Attempted Murder • Manslaughter • Rape • Attempted Rape • Sexual Assault • Robbery (firearm) • Wounding with intent • Kidnapping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victim unknown • Random/unprovoked attack • Extreme/sadistic/ frenzied violence • Life threatening violence / injuries • Firearm discharged in a public place • Carried out for financial gain • Serial/repeat offences • Escalation in offending behaviour
Sexual Offences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rape • Attempted Rape • Buggery • Sexual Assault 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victim unknown • Random/unprovoked attack • Extreme/sadistic/ ritualistic violence • Life threatening injuries • Weapons used • Repeat/serial offences • Previous sexual offending • Escalation in offending behaviour
Robbery and Offences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robbery • Conspiracy to rob with firearms • Possession of a firearm • Possession of ammunition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firearms present or found subsequently • Firearm discharged in public place • Firearm discharged at person(s) • Significant amount of money stolen • Significant standing in an Organised Crime Group • Professional armed robbery • Serial/repeat offences • Escalation in offending behaviour
Importation of Class A Drugs (including conspiracy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importation of class A drugs • Conspiracy to import class A drugs • Possession of drugs with intent to supply 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drugs valued in excess of £10M • Conspiracy to import drugs in excess of £10M • Firearms used/present • Significant standing in an Organised Crime Group • Repeat Offences
Possession WI to Supply Explosives	<i>MUST BE REPORTED IN</i>	<i>MUST BE REPORTED IN</i>
Offences Connected with Terrorism	<i>MUST BE REPORTED IN</i>	<i>MUST BE REPORTED IN</i>
Offences Under the Official Secrets Act	<i>MUST BE REPORTED IN</i>	<i>MUST BE REPORTED IN</i>

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