



**STANDING COMMITTEE
OF
TYNWALD COURT
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**RECORTYS OIKOIL
BING VEAYN TINVAAL**

**PROCEEDINGS
DAALTYN**

**CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL AFFAIRS
AND JUSTICE COMMITTEE**

Youth Justice

HANSARD

Douglas, Monday, 4th April 2022

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Members Present:

Chair: Miss T M August-Hanson MLC
Mr S G Peters MHK

Clerk:

Mr J D C King

Assistant Clerk:

Miss A H Khan

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Constitutional and Legal Affairs and Justice

Youth Justice

*The Committee sat in public at 2.32 p.m.
in the Legislative Council Chamber,
Legislative Buildings, Douglas*

[MISS AUGUST-HANSON *in the Chair*]

Procedural

The Chair (Miss August-Hanson): Welcome to this public meeting of the Standing Committee of Tynwald on Constitutional and Legal Affairs and Justice. I am Tanya August-Hanson MLC and this is Stu Peters. I am the Chair of the Committee.

5 Firstly, can we make sure that all of our mobile phones are switched off or on silent, so that we do not have any interruptions – I have just done that myself. For the purposes of *Hansard* I will be ensuring that we do not have two people speaking at any one particular point in time.

EVIDENCE OF

**Mr Stephen Taylor, Head of Children’s Residential Services, St Christopher’s,
and Ms Caroline Coole, Manager, Cronk Sollysh Children’s Home**

Q75. The Chair: For the benefit of Hansard and anyone listening, please could you both introduce yourselves?

10 **Mr Taylor:** I am Stephen Taylor. I am the Head of Children’s Residential Services for St Christopher’s.

Ms Coole: My name is Caroline Coole. I am the Manager of Cronk Sollysh, the children’s secure home.

15 **Q76. The Chair:** I suppose a really friendly place to start would be to ask, for the record, if you have any statement prepared, or anything that you would like start with.

Ms Coole: No.

20 **Mr Taylor:** No, we are fine.

Q77. The Chair: No, okay. Just to get us going, then, how does St Christopher’s on the Isle of Man link with the UK? What does the structure look like?

25 **Mr Taylor:** From within St Christopher's? St Christopher's is, shall we say, the mother organisation, which is based in Putney. They run services in London, Birmingham and a few other zones around Essex. They won a contract on the Island in 2004 to run the services that we are running now. They won that contract, I guess, based on their experience, knowledge and background in working with vulnerable young people.

30 St Christopher's had been a charity since 1870 and evolved to where it is now through that period. It originally started in 1870, working with street kids in London, finding a hostel for the kids who were living on the streets in London, so it has evolved over a period of time to a very established children's charity.

35 **Q78. Mr Peters:** So it was St Christopher's in the UK that actually bid for the work in the first place, and then established an Isle of Man branch?

40 **Mr Taylor:** Yes. We are St Christopher's Isle of Man and it is a separate organisation and a separate company, but St Christopher's UK is the –

Q79. The Chair: So that was in 2004, was it?

Mr Taylor: In 2004, yes.

45 **Q80. The Clerk:** I am Jonathan King, Clerk of the Committee. You said it was a separate company, but on the website it lists all the trustees without distinction, the implication being that the Isle of Man based trustees are also trustees of the UK operation. Is that right?

50 **Mr Taylor:** Yes, probably two years ago the trustees in the UK decided that there was to be one representative from the Isle of Man on their board of trustees because we were such a big part of the organisation. We felt that we were not a full part of the organisation, as we had nobody on our board of trustees, so that happened about two years ago.

55 **Q81. The Clerk:** There is just one trustee from the Isle of Man on the board of the wider organisation?

Mr Taylor: Yes.

60 **Q82. The Clerk:** Does the Isle of Man operation have its own website?

Mr Taylor: No.

Q83. The Clerk: Is there any reason for that?

65 **Mr Taylor:** Not really, no. On the website you can link to the Isle of Man and it filters you off to all the services we have in the Isle of Man.

The Clerk: Thanks.

70 **Q84. The Chair:** So, it has its own set of landing pages, essentially?

Mr Taylor: Yes.

75 **Q85. The Chair:** I suppose the natural next question, then, is less about the UK and how the UK operates but how the Isle of Man operation is funded: is it a grab model contract for services?

Mr Taylor: It is 100% contracted to the Government. We provide a number of additional services, which we raise funds for, and that is our Support into Employment Team. We have raised funds for them for the last four years.

80 **Q86. The Chair:** How does working together for the Care Services versus Cronk Sollysh ...? Is it different? Are they different departments, different boards, offices?

Ms Coole: No, Cronk Sollysh sits within the residential contract with Manx Care.

85 **Q87. The Chair:** So they are all part of one contract?

Mr Taylor: Technically, we have three contracts: one being residential – children’s homes; one being our aftercare services, which is a separate contract; and one being the wraparound services, which is our therapy. So it is three separate contracts within the one contract, if you know what I mean.

90

Q88. The Chair: Did they all come about at around the same period in time?

Mr Taylor: Yes.

95

Q89. The Chair: And they are all up for renewal at the same time, are they?

Mr Taylor: Yes, they are all up for renewal at the same time.

100 **Q90. The Chair:** How does that sit at the moment, then? Am I right in saying that the contract for St Christopher’s was finished around COVID, the formal contract, and now it has been extended?

Mr Taylor: Yes, it was extended for three years.

105

Q91. The Chair: Can you tell us a little bit more about how that might work? And have you had any communication from Manx Care in terms of ...?

Mr Taylor: We are expecting the contract to be up for renewal in February next year, but we have not had confirmation of that yet.

110

Q92. The Clerk: While you are on the contracts, Chair ... This renewal which took place in 2020, was that going back to the procurement of 2015? There was a five-year contract from then.

115 **Mr Taylor:** Yes, it was a three-year contract with the provision to add two additional years if they wanted to.

Q93. The Clerk: A three-year contract?

120 **Mr Taylor:** Yes.

Q94. The Clerk: When did you win the three-year –?

Mr Taylor: That was in 2017.

125

Q95. The Clerk: In 2017?

Mr Taylor: Yes.

130 **Q96. The Clerk:** Right, okay, because our previous Committee looked at one of these from 2014, so you have had a series of these contracts?

Mr Taylor: Yes, it is normally about five years, the contract, and we have had to re-tender a number of times where we compete with other organisations who want to tender for the services.

135 **Q97. The Chair:** So it must be quite difficult, then, in that case. You are now in limbo, because between now and in a year's time ...

140 *Mr Taylor:* Yes, it is challenging for staff and challenging for the young people. The young people, I guess, do not really understand a lot about it, but the staff ... Effectively you are concerned about your job every five years, whether you are going to win the contract or somebody else is going to win the contract and use you, or not. So it is added anxieties for staff, but the good part about it is that whoever wins the contract is winning the staff team as well, if that is the right word – they are gaining the staff team as well – but it is hard to get that across to staff who do not quite understand.

145

Q98. Mr Peters: So if somebody else got the contract, the staff would probably remain, doing the same job but –?

Mr Taylor: Yes, but for a different company.

150

Q99. The Chair: It still moderately unsettling, though.

Mr Taylor: Yes.

155 **Q100. The Chair:** In 2022 the impact report that is on your website says that £18.3 million was spent last year. Could you break that down? Do you have an idea of what that was spent on?

160 *Mr Taylor:* The majority is staffing costs. As a charity, we do not really make a profit. Any money that is left over from our contract is spent on the Island – that is a contractual obligation – but the majority of our costs are down to staffing costs.

Q101. The Chair: Is a lot of that spent on the Isle of Man, or did it go across?

165 *Mr Taylor:* Not the £18 million – that is the whole organisation. We are about a third of the organisation.

Q102. The Chair: So a third of those costs, then, I am assuming came to the Isle of Man and was spent here.

170 *Mr Taylor:* Yes, our contract is about £5 million, and every penny of that is spent on the Island. Sorry, we do spend a commission for the services in the UK. HR, IT and general services are in the UK.

175 **Q103. The Chair:** Thank you. In response to a Question in the House of Keys, there was an Answer in February 2015 regarding the income and expenditure of registered charities. Your expenditure in 2013-14 was £4.8 million, which is in line with what you have just said, but could you provide an explanation of the changes that may have happened since then? It has stayed relatively static, has it, then?

180 **Mr Taylor:** Yes, relatively static, but in the last contract we reduced the number of children's
homes and more money was spent on community services, because obviously the aim of every ...
Manx Care reduced the number of young people who were actually in care, so more money was
spent on community services and less on children's homes. I think, at the time, they closed three
children's homes, and we came up with a solution to have more young people in our homes than
185 we had traditionally. The idea was to save costs so more money could be spent on community
services at, I guess, the early-intervention stages.

Q104. The Chair: And currently St Christopher's is looking at ...? In a previous oral evidence
session for the Poverty Committee I believe it was said that St Christopher's is looking at between
190 the years of 18 to 25 and above, so the funding that would be there – that £4.85 million to £5
million – would then go on those individuals as well as those you have already got. So how would
that work? Is that feasible?

Mr Taylor: I do not really know about that age group; that is the age group we do not work
with. That is a gap in the market and we are trying to find funding to find some accommodation.
195 The problem, as you will have heard, is lack of accommodation for that age range. So it is not a
contractual service; the contractual service is to support young people up until they are 25.

Q105. The Chair: But that would still come out of the £5 million, though?

200 **Mr Taylor:** Yes, that comes out of the aftercare budget.

Q106. The Chair: On the website, it says that St Christopher's began providing children's
services on the Isle of Man in 2004 and since then have expanded work on the Island to include
care leaver support, therapeutic work and secure care. We are coming on to secure care a little
205 bit later, but first can you just tell us about the care leaver support?

Mr Taylor: Yes, that is the Aftercare Team. When a young person is in care they have masses
of support and help, to help them get through what is often a challenging period in their lives, and
what we found was once they had left care there was very little support. You and I have families
210 to go to. Sometimes these young people ... I will give you an example. If your washing machine
breaks down on a Sunday afternoon, you go and get your dad to fix it, whereas they have not got
anybody to go to, so we put –

Q107. The Chair: Preparing them?

215 **Mr Taylor:** Yes, we have put a service together to try and help young people who are dealing
with emergencies. That is probably a very simple explanation. You can understand that we all have
somewhere to go to, but sometimes the kids who have come through our care system do not, so
we wanted to be the people they come to.

Q108. The Chair: And how much do you actually have set aside for that?

Mr Taylor: Funding-wise, I could not tell you that. I can find out and send you that, if need be.
I will have to find out and send you that.

225

Q109. The Chair: Yes, please, if you would do, I would appreciate it.

In the procurement process in 2014 you won contracts for residential services, looked-after
children's services and the leaving care services. The procurement was subject to an inquiry in
another parliamentary Committee. Are those services that are provided today the exact same
230 services, or have they changed in any way?

235 **Mr Taylor:** From 2014, there were a couple of homes we will have changed now. A number of our homes we rent from private landlords and we may not be in them now, as all landlords were ... in 2014. We have looked for some bigger houses to try to get more young people in for less cost ... I guess is the solution. So it is not quite the same number of services as before, because some addresses may have changed.

240 **Q110. The Chair:** Could you provide us with any data that you hold regarding children in care and also in the youth justice side of things as well, in Cronk Sollysh? If there is any data that you have on file that you feel will help the Committee in reading through and understanding what it is that you do, would you be able to please send it through to us?

Mr Taylor: Yes, we have got that, and we can.

245 **Q111. The Chair:** Thank you very much.
Just moving on to Cronk Sollysh, then, firstly a very basic question: what is Cronk Sollysh?

250 **Ms Coole:** Cronk Sollysh is a purpose-built facility that accommodates young people who come to us through the courts from custodial sentencing or from a police station on remand, but we also take young people on a secure welfare order, which again is a court order but comes through Social Care as opposed to the justice system.

Q112. The Chair: And what would prompt that intervention?

255 **Ms Coole:** For a welfare order, they are looked-after children who are still either with the services in place as a looked-after child or still unable to maintain themselves safely in the community. Social Care can apply for a welfare order to hold them in a secure facility, and then we would put a programme of intervention in place to support the young people to understand some of the risks they were facing and try to work with them to reintegrate them back into the community.

260

Mr Taylor: I would just add that they have to be deemed a serious risk to themselves or to other people to meet the criteria for a welfare order.

265 **Q113. The Chair:** Is there currently enough resource in place? Do you feel you are well-resourced enough to be able to handle the corporate parenting, I suppose, to a degree, of children who have been through what they have been through?

270 **Ms Coole:** We have not had anybody in on a welfare order for the last two years. All our admissions have been custody or remand, so on a welfare basis those young people who could be deemed as high risk or very vulnerable are being managed in the community.

Q114. The Chair: Do you have numbers of how many you have coming through for custodial or remand?

275 **Ms Coole:** Yes. Last year the total number of admissions was 39 throughout the year, and that was in relation to 14 individuals. Some of those were re-admitted for breach of bail or for further offences. Fifty six per cent of those admissions were just overnight remand, where they were held overnight at the secure home, appeared before the next available court and then were bailed back into the community.

280

Q115. The Chair: What kinds of offences are we talking about here?

Ms Coole: Lots of them are drug offences. We have had some GBH weapon offences. We have seen an increase in drug offences alongside offences that have involved possession of bladed articles, or common assaults – ABH, GBH.

285

Q116. The Chair: When we talked to the Chief Constable in a previous evidence session of this Committee, he said that some of the offences are perhaps getting more serious, or have done over the course of the last year. Could you just reflect on that, please?

290

Ms Coole: Yes, we have seen a link. We have always had low-level drug offences with our young people coming through, but the amount of possession has increased. We have had young people who have been charged with handling large amounts of money as well, and an increase in weapons connected to some of those charges – concealing weapons, possession of weapons – and also some violent offences.

295

Q117. The Clerk: While we are talking about the work that you do and the people who are there, you mentioned, I think, the figure for the number that were just overnight remand cases – so that is the shortest stay, I guess. What would be the longest-staying resident that you would have?

300

Ms Coole: It varies, really. Most of our custodial sentences are quite short for juveniles, but we have had a young person in, several years ago, who was given a two-and-a-half-year sentence. But those long sentences are quite rare. We are usually dealing with six- to eight-week sentences.

305

Q118. The Clerk: And does the sentence ever go across the person's 18th birthday?

Ms Coole: It does, yes.

310

Q119. The Clerk: What happens then?

Ms Coole: We have had several young people whose sentence has gone across their 18th birthday. We put a transition plan in place with the Prison. As soon as the young person is sentenced and we know that they are going to transfer over to the Prison on their 18th birthday, we contact the Prison straightaway, make them aware, let them know. Then we do some joint working. They will identify a key officer for the young person, who will come down and visit them at Cronk Sollysh. We also do a transition visit as well. We will take the young person up prior to their transfer date, so they can go through the admissions process with them and go through what is going to happen to them and show them the wing of the Prison that they will be on.

315

We have had some really successful transition visits for young people. There was one young man we took up and they identified a peer mentor for him as well, who would have been accommodated on the same wing in the Prison. He was there to meet him on his first day for transfer, just to try to reduce the potential trauma of that transition.

320

Q120. The Chair: When you say a successful transition, what does that look like?

325

Ms Coole: The young person has felt comfortable and confident in making that move. Cronk Sollysh is a different establishment than the Prison, so there is that worry of moving into the adult estate and young people can find some anxiety around that, but by putting those measures in place and trying to support them and give them as much information about the Prison as we can and have them meet the prison officers, it has reduced that anxiety and people have gone up to the Prison with less anxiety than we have seen previously.

330

Q121. The Chair: Just digging down a little bit into the differences between Cronk Sollysh and the Prison, can you just expand on that and the culture, the support, the care? Could you give us a comparison between one and the other?

335

Ms Coole: Yes, of course. We are a secure care home, so we are run by Manx Care. We have quite low numbers, so we have a staff team in place who ... It is a high level of engagement with the young people, so we have somebody with the young people all the time; they have always got a staff member around to support them. We have based a lot of stuff on building relationships, that effective communication with young people, involving them in what is happening with their care.

340

The young people are assessed when they come in. We would look at what their needs are as well as what their offences are, so we would look at a wide range of needs to see where we can put support in to help them with that.

345

Our young people do attend education every day. We have an on-site Education Team, so they get 25 hours of education a week. We find that lots of our young people have come from a background where they have possibly not attended education or they have been on reduced timetables, or they have been on suspension from school, so it is very small steps to get them back into an education programme, but the team are really effective at supporting and working with young people on that.

350

Q122. The Chair: And if they are turning 18, how does that then transition into the Prison, and how does it compare?

355

Ms Coole: We would provide the Prison with any information. We work on a functional skills programme for English and maths, which, as far as I am aware, is similar to what the Prison runs as well, so we would hand over where the young person was at to the education team up there.

Q123. The Chair: And the culture is much more informal, much more relationship focused?

360

Ms Coole: Absolutely.

Mr Taylor: 'Nurture' is the key word.

365

Ms Coole: Lots of our young people have probably come from neglectful families or they have had adverse childhood experiences, so our staff are trained in those areas to be able to support and work with young people.

370

We feel that their punishment was given at the court with the restriction of their liberty by coming into us, so we do not then look to further punish them for their offences. We really look to how we can, together, as a team – we have a multi-agency approach with lots of other services – help and support that young person. Our view is very much to get them to leave us with support put in place that will hopefully prevent them from going on and reoffending.

Q124. The Chair: How many do reoffend once they have left?

375

Ms Coole: It depends. We have some figures. Last year, we had one individual who had had six or more admissions. Some of those were just for breach of bail, so they would be overnight remands and then released from the court the next day.

380

We try to put a lot of support in place for them when they leave, to make sure that they are not just put back out into the community with no support. It is really difficult on small islands: we take young people in and provide them with lots of support, and then we are putting them back into the same community that they have come from, and it is quite easy for young people to fall back into that trap.

385 **Q125. The Clerk:** You said it was small. How many people were in Cronk Sollysh last night?

Ms Coole: Last night, just one.

Q126. The Clerk: So it is really small.

390 **Ms Coole:** Yes, we average one or two throughout the year. The last time we had any more than four would have been during lockdown, in April, when we had quite a few young people who were given short sentences for COVID breaches.

Q127. The Clerk: How many members of staff work there permanently?

395

Ms Coole: I have a staff team of 15; there will be three or four on shift each day. And then we have a team of education support workers who come in.

Q128. The Clerk: Presumably, being an education support worker is not their full-time job.

400

Ms Coole: Yes, it is their full-time ... We have a team of full-time education support workers.

Q129. The Clerk: Okay, so there are three, four or five people there, residential overnight staff. Is that right?

405

Ms Coole: Yes, and then on top of that we have a team of education support workers.

The Clerk: Thank you.

410

Q130. The Chair: Joint working between yourselves and all of those others who are perhaps working across the justice system – how does that come together?

415

Ms Coole: As part of our custody rules, we have to hold a detention planning meeting for young people within their first week of admission, and that would pull in any other agencies that were maybe already involved with working with that young person or that we had identified potentially could support that young person. We would look at Drug and Alcohol workers and mental health support, Health, the youth justice support workers and schools – and families, really; we would invite their families to be involved as well.

420

Q131. The Clerk: You have not used the word 'Police'. What is a youth justice support worker?

Ms Coole: The youth justice support workers are the statutory social workers who work within Manx Care, who look after young people under the age of 17 who are going through the criminal justice system.

425

Q132. The Clerk: You would not routinely have a police contact at that stage?

430

Ms Coole: No. We have, in the past, had members of the Police come in. Especially if, when we have looked at assessed needs for young people, a young person particularly has a problem where they have poor relations with the Police and that could be a flashpoint for them, we have brought police officers in to try to rebuild relationships with young people before they are released back into the community.

435

Q133. Mr Peters: Just a quick question from me. You talk about nurturing positive futures, and I think that is the mood of the profession. I understand that, and, talking to the Chief Constable,

that is very much the way he looks at it as well. Members of the public will not see it that way at all, and they might see this as a soft option and a sort of a school of crime. How would you answer those concerns?

440 **Ms Coole:** I think, like I said before, we look at it as the young people have received their punishment through the courts and we want to work with them in a way to try and prevent them from reoffending.

445 **Q134. Mr Peters:** So it is just their loss of liberty, effectively?

Ms Coole: Yes, they have lost their liberty. We do work with them on their offences. We would do offence-focused work with them to try to look at how we support them to make some changes in their lives, or some sort of motivational thought for change, to think about how they could go out and what they could do differently to reduce their reoffending.

450

Q135. Mr Peters: The Chief Constable also talked about the new drug problems, where young people are trapped into a life of crime. Is that one of the reasons you see violent crime on the increase, because people are trying to effectively tool up in case that goes horribly wrong?

455 **Ms Coole:** I would say, in my opinion, yes, there is a direct correlation between increase in drug offences and those with the use of weapons and violence. Steve might be able to give you more information. Steve sits on a board with regard to that.

Mr Taylor: I sit on the Safeguarding Board as well, and we have seen a massive increase in knife possession on the Island and a lot of young people saying it is for their own protection.

460

Just going back to the question you asked Caroline, what we sometimes forget is that most of the young people who come through our services are also victims themselves. We forget that most of them – virtually all of them – have had to go through some sort of trauma in their lives and there is a reason why they behave as they do. Yes, we understand the public's concerns, but we have to look into the full background of the young people, why they are like they are and what has happened to them, and significantly, most of the time, they have had to go through some pretty scary trauma in their lives. So yes, they are offending, and that needs challenging and they need punishing for it, but we need to look at why they are there and what we can do differently to help them deal with that trauma, and that is one of the things we do extremely well in our children's homes and in our secure home as well.

465

470

Q136. Mr Peters: And I do not suppose it is really a school of crime if you have between one and four people there.

475 **Mr Taylor:** No.

Ms Coole: No, and we have the ability in the building to be able to separate young people, so if we thought that one young person was potentially at risk of another one, we have the staff and the room in the building to be able to separate them, so we are not putting anybody at further risk of harm while they are in the building.

480

Q137. Mr Peters: Again, apologies for this – because my previous experience to doing this is effectively in the commercial sector, so I do not know an awful lot about what you do. On the face of it, it sounds like you are massively overstaffed for the number of people you are dealing with. What would you say to that?

485

Mr Taylor: The secure home has to be overstaffed. The building can accommodate up to seven young people, so there might only be one in tonight but tomorrow there might be seven, so we need to be prepared for that. It is not a service where we can say, 'No, we are not ready.' If something happens tonight or tomorrow, then we have to accommodate these young people.

490 In our services we have reallocated a lot, so while the secure home is quiet the staff will be doing other things. They do youth justice work, they do support other services, they help other arms – they are not sitting waiting for little Johnny to come. We have a long list of services that they can support. We do that as an additional ... to go and support other services, because yes, staff do not like sitting around waiting, staff want to be busy; we have found that over the last few
495 years, so we support our community services with staff from Cronk Sollysh when it is quiet.

Mr Peters: Thank you.

500 **Q138. The Chair:** On a couple of occasions in this session you have mentioned that the support is all there, but once those individuals leave they then go back into the community that they came from before they entered into the justice system. What could be improved in that space, do you think? What could be done? In an ideal world, if you could bring anything about, what would make that situation better?

505 **Ms Coole:** When a young person comes through our door we are already thinking about what is going to happen to them when they leave and what we can put in place, so we look at access to education, access to College placements, access to employment, housing if we need to, and I guess all those areas could be improved.

510 If we have capacity, we would offer them some drop-back sessions with the staff, to just check in on them and make sure they are okay. Lots of our young people who are in custody are from our children's homes, so they are going back to a care home with a staff team there to support them, but we do have some who go directly back into the community, and so we do give them some ongoing support with that.

515 We also have a youth justice interventions worker now attached to Cronk Sollysh. He is employed by St Christopher's but he does a lot of support work with youth justice, supports them with their probation orders. Part of his role, as well, will be to offer some of that ongoing support, to support a young person's journey into custody and then out again.

I guess access to better education, better employment and better housing could all be improved for young people.

520

Q139. Mr Peters: What kind of a percentage of young people take advantage of that sort of aftercare voluntarily, rather than just because they might have a girlfriend or a boyfriend there, who they want to see? How many carry on?

525 **Ms Coole:** Lots of our young people are from our children's homes, so they will get the support from the staff teams there. The ones we have had into the community, yes, we have had quite a good uptake of support from young people.

530 At the secure home, because you have a staff member with you all the time, you can build quite strong, supportive relationships in a quite short space of time, so we become an important person in that young person's life. They have come to us possibly from some sort of crisis, from having offended, possibly a traumatic experience. We support them through that process, so you tend to find that they want to come back and spend some time with us.

535 **Q140. Mr Peters:** They want to come back; that is the important thing.

Ms Coole: Yes, we have built those really strong relationships. On an eight-hour shift at Cronk Sollysh you would spend six-plus hours with that young person as a staff team, so you do develop

really positive relationships and I am very fortunate to have a really good staff team who are able to do that quite quickly with young people.

540

Q141. The Chair: You mentioned the youth justice interventions worker – is that just one individual?

Ms Coole: Yes, one individual.

545

Q142. The Chair: Is that almost professionalising the rehabilitative side of things, then – the more serious, I suppose, rehabilitative interventions? How does that feed into the mix?

Ms Coole: The youth justice interventions worker is a new role, so we are still developing that role at the moment. Once young people have left Cronk Sollysh, if they finish their custodial sentence they may not have any other orders over them, so there would not be anything formal for them to come to. It is what we would be offering on a supportive basis.

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Q143. The Chair: What qualifications does that individual have, to do what they are doing? What experience do they have?

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Ms Coole: He is a former prison officer and he has been instrumental, in the prisons he has worked with in the UK, to do lots of rehabilitation work and support work with prisoners. He is currently undertaking a Diploma in Youth Justice Practice, as are the rest of the staff team.

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Q144. The Chair: On the rehabilitation side of things then, the Prison and Probation Service: how does the provision from Cronk Sollysh compare strictly on rehabilitation between what St Christopher's offer with Cronk Sollysh and the rehabilitation work that is done over at the Prison and Probation Service?

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Ms Coole: I would not be able to answer that, I am afraid; I do not have the experience or the knowledge of having worked in the Prison to know how that works.

Q145. The Chair: There is no conversation, I suppose, that is going on between the Prison and Probation Service and St Christopher's about what may work, what does not work, what works well over that way?

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Ms Coole: We have met with the Prison on several occasions over the last couple of years – COVID has put a little bit of a stop to that – and we have done some work mostly around the transfer of young people from the juvenile estate through to the adult estate.

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Q146. The Chair: Okay, so it is not necessarily about getting together and having that conversation about how to improve services on both sides of the fence?

Ms Coole: No. We have had some discussions. We have had discussions with them about how we could look at some things that we have done in our building to make it easier for young people when they go into the adult estate. We were meeting regularly with the Prison, however COVID stopped that; but it is something that we would resume. We have quite good relationships with the Prison.

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Q147. The Clerk: You said that the youth justice interventions officer was a former prison officer. Is that person someone who served in the Isle of Man Prison?

Ms Coole: No, from the UK.

590 **Q148. The Clerk:** Served in a UK prison?

Ms Coole: Yes.

The Clerk: Thank you.

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Q149. The Chair: The Community Intervention Service at Cronk Sollysh – how successful is it, and what are the bright points about it? Is there anything that you would improve?

Ms Coole: That is our youth justice interventions worker.

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Q150. The Chair: Is that the one worker?

Ms Coole: Yes, that is his role.

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Q151. The Chair: And that has not yet been fully developed?

Ms Coole: We are developing it as we go along. His role is to work alongside the statutory youth justice workers within Manx Care. He is given young people to work with, to look at interventions. It is a prevention of custody, really; it is looking at alternatives to custody by offering community-based orders.

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Q152. The Clerk: That is really interesting. Statutory youth justice ... I am sorry to harp on about this –

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The Chair: No, I was thinking the same thing.

The Clerk: – but this is very interesting to me because I genuinely did not know any of this. You talk about a statutory youth justice officer – and this is nothing to do with the Police, this is somebody who is part of Manx Care, so I might recognise him, as a layman, as a specially qualified social worker who does youth justice?

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Ms Coole: Yes.

Q153. The Clerk: Right, and how many of them are there in the Isle of Man?

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Ms Coole: There is one worker and then there is a manager.

Q154. The Clerk: Okay. And you talk about statutory services. We are talking about the Social Services statutes, presumably?

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Ms Coole: My interventions worker is responsible for the direct work with the young people. The statutory responsibility comes from Manx Care for providing the pre-sentence reports and attending court on their behalf.

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Q155. The Clerk: Right, okay. Is this in any way anywhere near what we used to have, the Family Court Welfare Service, or is that completely different?

Ms Coole: It is completely different.

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Q156. The Clerk: Okay, so it is not the family court, it is the criminal court?

Ms Coole: It is the criminal court, yes, but everybody who goes through the juvenile court system would have some contact with the youth justice worker because they would attend the court and make recommendations for sentencing, but that is done by the statutory social worker for youth justice, as opposed to our interventions worker.

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Q157. The Clerk: Got it, thank you. And the thing about the non-custodial disposals – are they something which exist at all in the Island, or are they just an aspiration at the minute?

Ms Coole: Young people can be sentenced to community-based orders such as probation orders, and our youth justice interventions worker would support those.

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The Clerk: Thank you.

Q158. The Chair: As we are on the subject of youth justice work within Government, the Youth Justice Team was dismantled, I would say, since the contract started in 2017, or the one that you signed up to in 2017 for three years. What was the effect of that on Cronk Sollysh and what was the effect for the team, for how all of this ...?

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Mr Taylor: To be honest with you, I have read the Chief Constable when he came to speak to you, and I have to say I agree with him. The Youth Justice Team at that time was an award-winning team that did some amazing work with a lot of people, and when it was dismantled – for whatever reason; I do not know why – it did impact on our services.

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There was a lot of working together with that team, with Health, Education, the Police, ourselves and Social Services, where they had somebody from each area working with individual young people. I was not part of the team, but I was working at the time and seeing the difference that group of people could make, whereas now I believe everybody is isolated a bit. Our biggest challenge is getting people together to take responsibility for a young person, and it is really difficult now to do that, where the Youth Justice Team managed to get it right, if you understand what I mean. They did some really good work because they sat around, shared an office. They talked about things; they were not in little silos; they were a group of people who sat together to make differences for young people.

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Q159. The Chair: And that was case-by-case review; that was very much putting the young person at the centre of all of the different provisions that they may well have needed?

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Mr Taylor: Yes. One of the questions you asked, which Caroline answered, was about how we work with the Police. Certainly in the residential services we work very closely with the Police MAPPU team, the Multi-Agency Police Protection Unit. We work very closely with them. I meet with them weekly. We discuss our most challenging young people. We share what challenges we have, they share what challenges they have, and we try to work together tirelessly to try to make a difference for the young people.

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One of the barriers we have is that sometimes young people in care have a stigma and it is about changing that stigma, and that sometimes the Police have a different view of young people than I have. It is about sharing our views and understanding why sometimes kids behave like they do, and we do that quite successfully through the Police, through the MAPPU team. They are our feed into the Police and the Police's feed into us. Before MAPPU, I guess any grievances between the two services were dealt with publicly, and now they are not; they are dealt with ... We meet regularly, we talk regularly, and it has worked extremely well in the last couple of years with the MAPPU.

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Q160. Mr Peters: I think you have answered the next question, really, (**Mr Taylor:** Sorry!) which was if the structures for inter-agency working are adequate now. We hear a lot in Government

about silo mentalities. Is that what things have gone back to, where people are looking after their own particular interests and not working co-operatively?

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Mr Taylor: I would not say we are not working together, because we are working together, but the question was around the old Youth Justice Team. I felt that was a much better model than we have now, so I would certainly support going back to that, but what we have now we have to do our best to try and make it work.

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On many occasions we have challenged the system. On many occasions I have challenged it when young people have not had the service I think they should have, and got some pretty positive responses from other services such as Education and Health.

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Sadly, when a young person comes into care, what tends to happen is everybody around that young person tends to disappear and think, 'Right, he is in care now, he is cured.' They are not. It is the start of a big battle and we have to get everybody back in, to come and work with us and work with the young person to help them through the challenges in their lives.

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Q161. Mr Peters: Is it just a way of working? Could that Youth Justice Team be reconstituted with the people we have, or would we need specialists to come in? Would we need additional funding, or is it just a case of working in a different way?

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Mr Taylor: Working in a different way. I think we have the personalities, the drive and the knowledge within our services on the Island to make that work again. My personal opinion was that personalities at the time stopped it working, which is probably not the right reason. It was not for the best of the services, it was probably personalities.

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That is just my personal opinion, not St Christopher's opinion. I am talking openly to you. I absolutely advocate the Youth Justice Team. The guy who set it up – Gary ... I cannot remember his name, a sergeant at the time – did an amazing job of holding people to account for services that support young people.

Q162. The Chair: So was that the critical thing, then? It was holding people to account, it was the drive to do that that has now been lost?

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Mr Taylor: Yes. Sadly, I go back long enough to remember the public inquiry in 2000 and remember how a lot of people neglected some young people at that time, so I am quite passionate about making sure everybody is responsible corporately for making these kids better people.

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Q163. The Chair: Have you been approached, then, about the Youth Justice Board? Obviously, we had the justice reform legislation through not so long ago. It put the Youth Justice Board on statute. Have you been approached about the Youth Justice Board, or had any conversations about how that might be put together, what that might look like yet? That, perhaps, is in the not-too-distant future.

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Mr Taylor: I would be more than happy to.

Q164. The Chair: But it was just that accountability? That is what it was: the drive, the accountability – hands to the fire, as it were?

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Mr Taylor: Yes.

Q165. The Chair: A difficult question here. If you have listened to the Chief Constable's oral evidence, then you will have heard him say not much about Cronk Sollysh, because he cannot do that and he was quite adamant that he would not have those discussions, but he did say that

745 youth justice on the Isle of Man needs professionalising. What was your response to what he had to say there?

Ms Coole: Yes, I read it and there was something in it, I think, that said there is a danger now that we have a prison for young people that is not run by people who are professional prison officers.

750 The secure home is run by Manx Care. It does not sit with Home Affairs, it sits with Social Care. We have worked tirelessly over the years to train our staff. They receive in-house training on how to work at Cronk Sollysh. We also do training with them on trauma, because as Steve said earlier, lots of our young people come from quite traumatic backgrounds and we are looking at it in that care and nurturing and supportive way. Our staff team are all undertaking a Youth Justice Diploma at the moment, just to give them some further knowledge in that area.

755 We are a secure care facility, as opposed to a young offenders' institution. We have also done some work with a secure care home in the UK. We did a piece of consultancy work about three years ago. It would have continued further, but COVID put a stop to that. They visited our facility and we visited theirs, and we took some learning from them, which was really useful.

760 I feel that we are doing a professional job with the young people we work with, and our staff are trained to support them.

Mr Taylor: We do not want to be prison officers; we are not prison officers. It is not a prison, it is a secure care home. We want to move away from prison officers, who work massively differently than we want our staff to work.

Q166. The Chair: So you would probably be – I am not wanting to put words into your mouth, but – quite opposed to moving from Manx Care or DHSC, from one Department through to Home Affairs, because there is that separation in culture that you feel is necessary. Am I right?

770 **Ms Coole:** And I think it is right for our young people. Our young people need that nurture, care and support.

775 I, personally, feel – and this is my view – that our 13- and 14-year-old offenders have not woken up one day and decided to be criminals; that has come from a background of trauma, of adverse childhood experiences and of issues within the family home that have potentially led them to that, along with the potential exploitation of children into crime. So I feel that our young people need that care, nurture and support and high level of staffing around them to be able to work with them to look at that motivation to change.

780 **Q167. The Chair:** The in-house training that you do, what does it incorporate? What are we looking at there?

785 **Ms Coole:** We would look at how to operate the building, the security equipment that we wear. All the doors are locked; the staff do carry keys. We converse over radios. We check security measures around the building every day. So we would look at that, but we would also look at some of the trauma training with young people coming through, how to build relationships, effective communication, and supporting young people while they are in custody.

790 **Q168. The Clerk:** You may have already covered this, in which case I apologise. Do you have links with Mental Health Services? During the eight-hour shifts during which your staff spend six hours with a young person, do they also see health professionals?

795 **Ms Coole:** We do, yes. We have close links with lots of agencies and Mental Health is one. We would have support from CAMHS but also St Christopher's have a wraparound contract which supports young people with their emotional well-being, so if a young person under CAMHS is not

seen by them, they can be seen by our own emotional and mental well-being support workers. We do see that their mental health is key. It can be quite a traumatic experience coming into custody. You are looking at taking a young person away from everything they know, their family support networks and their friends.

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Mr Taylor: Can I just add that, training wise, we do also train staff in physical interventions, if need be. If a young person got so out of control, our staff are trained to deal with them physically and keep them safe. The contrast with the Prison would be that because the Court of Human Rights does not allow us to use pain when controlling a young person, we have to use safe, comforting techniques, and that is what our staff have to deal with. It is very rarely used, but we are all trained in it in dealing with physical interventions, if need be.

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Q169. Mr Peters: How secure is Cronk Sollysh?

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Mr Taylor: Extremely secure.

Q170. Mr Peters: Do you allow young people out on day release?

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Mr Taylor: No.

Ms Coole: We are looking at that for the future. We have done, a long time ago. When the Youth Justice Team was well established, we did have a young man who went out on day release at the end of his sentence. He had served quite a long sentence, so we were quite conscious that he needed to rehabilitate slowly back into the community, and that was part of it. We have not done that for a long time.

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The young people will go out to medical appointments, if need be, and Noonan at the courts provide the transport, so we make sure that they can go to routine dentist appointments and opticians. We do not have a health centre within our building – we do not have a nurse's room or a doctor's room – so they are limited to what they can do. The community dentist will come in and do basic check-ups, but if young people need further work we can take them out to those appointments. The same with the opticians – they cannot bring in all the equipment they need, so to make sure that their health needs are met, they can go out to those appointments that cannot take place in the building. But we are looking, in the future, for day release for young people.

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Q171. Mr Peters: I ask the question because you quite often see media articles, especially on social media, about young people who have gone AWOL. That will be from just ordinary care homes, then, rather than the secure unit?

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Mr Taylor: Yes.

Ms Coole: Yes.

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Q172. The Chair: But then day release – over in the UK, obviously they have been doing that for an awful long time as a good-behaviour benefit, and that has worked quite well over there, has it not, alongside education, mental health support and everything else, and that corporate parenting support? So what has changed between the Youth Justice Team and when that was being considered at that point in time and now?

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Ms Coole: I think a lot of it is down to the length of sentence. The young person we had in was on a lengthy sentence. Lots of our other sentences, as I said earlier, are quite short. You would not necessarily look at day release in a six- to eight-week sentence, but if we are looking at longer

sentences, then ... We are working with the youth justice team at the moment to put a formal process in place so we can use day release for young people.

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Q173. The Chair: Is that with MAPPU, or is that with Manx Care?

Ms Coole: No, it will be with Manx Care with the youth justice workers.

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Q174. The Clerk: Mr Taylor, you have been here since 2000, and I wonder if you could tell us a bit about the history of Cronk Sollysh, because that name has not been around that long, has it?

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Mr Taylor: No. We took over the contract at Cronk Sollysh; we did not originally open it. When it was opened in 2000, it was another organisation and we took over the contract – I think it was in 2006, was it? (**Ms Coole:** In 2004.)

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We researched how we felt the building would be best run by visiting a number of other services in the UK – Scotland and Northern Ireland – and we put together a programme, which we implemented at the time, moving away from prison officers to the services we try to provide now. We introduced the education service because, as Caroline said, a lot of our young people have really missed out on education, and we have had some tremendous successes with that. We have had young people who have sat GCSEs and passed GCSEs in the building; it is a registered GCSE facility. We implemented what we felt would be best to make a difference for some pretty challenging young people, and that has gone back to 2006 when we took over.

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Q175. The Clerk: The website says:

Since 2004 the number of young people who need secure care has reduced. To respond to this changing need, we have worked in partnership with the Government to redevelop the secure home and launch an integrated service.

That is what you have just been talking about. So you launched it sometime after 2004?

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Mr Taylor: Yes. When we took over, the contract was for seven young people; our contract now is just for three young people. At that time, there were six people on shift 24 hours a day and we felt that was massively excessive, so we reduced the number of staff. We did an audit of the previous two years – how many young people had been in the building – and we worked out how many staff we thought we would need to keep it safe, so we reduced the cost of the service.

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Q176. The Clerk: Why did you change the name?

Mr Taylor: We changed the name because sometimes a change in name makes people feel differently about something. It is about 'This is a something different now.' It was called a children's secure home, which is not really a great name to call something, so we had a competition, with staff and young people, to think of a name, and we came up with Cronk Sollysh.

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Q177. The Chair: So stigma-reducing, a culture change?

Mr Taylor: Yes.

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Q178. The Clerk: Were a lot of staff still there throughout that transition? Did you have the same people before and after it?

Mr Taylor: We have a lot of staff who are still with us from that time, yes; we had a lot of staff at that time who did not want to work with us.

895 **The Clerk:** Okay, that is very interesting.

Q179. The Chair: We have talked a little bit about inter-agency joint working. Are there any ways that perhaps it could be ...? We have talked a little bit about what, in an ideal world, we could improve, particularly once people leave Cronk Sollysh. Do you have any more detail to add to all of that?
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Ms Coole: No, I am quite happy, currently, with the multi-agency working that we have. We have really great support from Mental Health Services and healthcare. We have a GP attached to the surgery who will deal with any health needs for the young people. A Drug and Alcohol worker will come on admission to speak to the young people and do an assessment, to see if they are going to suffer from any symptoms of withdrawal. That helps us manage the young person in the building, so she is very good to come in on admission. We have good working with our aftercare service. Our Support into Employment Team will come in and speak to the young people. So currently we are accessing lots of services to support our young people.
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Ms Coole: We have good links with the College at the moment as well, looking at college placements for young people. One of the key things when a young person leaves us is that they do not go back to what they were doing before, and one of the key things is to get them into some form of education, training scheme or employment that will reduce their free time – when they may go out and offend or be vulnerable and at risk of being exploited to offend – so one of our key things is to look at how we give that young person purpose to their day.
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Q180. The Chair: But I suppose some of the custodial sentences would be so short that the amount of influence you may have on one of those young individuals perhaps might be quite limited.
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Ms Coole: Yes, but we try. As soon as a young person comes through our door, no matter what sentence they are given we are looking to see what we can do for them when they leave and what support services we can get in place. A lot of it is about re-engagement.

Ms Coole: We have had a young person in recently who was not engaging very well with services. We knew he was only going to be in for a short space of time, and over that period of time we managed to get him to re-engage with a lot of the services that he had previously ...
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Ms Coole: They are a bit of a captive audience. They cannot leave; they are there. Once we bring professionals in to talk to them, there is nowhere for them to go, and you tend to find that they open up and they will re-engage. It is something to do in the day rather than sitting there.
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Q181. The Clerk: Talking of something to do, can I just ask a specific question about communications? When I think of young people between 13 and 18 I think of people who have their noses in their phones a lot.

Ms Coole: They do not have any access to –
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Q182. The Clerk: They have no access to the internet?

Ms Coole: They have no access to their phones, they have no access to social media, and they have no choice but to sit with us. Well, they do have a choice; they could go to their bedroom. If they chose to, they could go and sit in their bedroom, but we tend to find that really rare.
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Ms Coole: I have an excellent staff team who are eclectic, diverse and quite clever in forming those relationships and talking to young people, trying to find common interests and common ground, even if it means that you end up listening to music that you possibly would never have listened to and you would not choose to listen to at home. It is finding that common ground with them, finding that hook in with them and finding a way in.
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950 It is rare that we would have a young person who just would not engage in communicating
with us. We eat our meals together. The staff are with the young people all the time, so they are
there to get them up in the morning, they sit and have breakfast with them, they will have their
break times with Education, they will sit down and have a cup of tea together. We all sit round the
table – they have to sit round the table to eat their meals – and that can be one of the best ways
to get a young person to communicate as well. They are busy eating and you are talking to them.

955 **Q183. The Clerk:** Do they find it difficult to not have social media?

Ms Coole: Do *they* find it difficult? (**The Clerk:** Yes.) I think so, yes. They would report that they
find it difficult – they miss it, don't they; like you said, often teenagers are permanently stuck with
their noses in their phones – but they usually then end up talking to us.

960 **Q184. The Clerk:** The European Court has not told you to give back their phones yet? (*Laughter*)

965 **Ms Coole:** We do allow young people communication with their friends and their families, so
they are entitled to make phone calls, they are entitled to visits, and over COVID we have
introduced video calling as well for young people. So they do have access to communicate, but
the visitors are monitored. They are checked to make sure that they are appropriate for these
young people and that these young people are not further being vulnerable to people on the
outside.

970 **Q185. The Chair:** Just going back to the relationship with the Police: the Police Early Action
Team I think was brought about in response to the Youth Justice Team having fallen as the police
response to it. How does that engage in with Cronk Sollysh and the work that is done at
St Christopher's?

975 **Ms Coole:** I think because they are so early intervention we have not had any dealings with the
early intervention team. I think I am right in saying that if those young people who were dealt with
by the early intervention team continue to offend it moves over to the youth justice team and
then we would start potentially having some contact if they were looking at a custodial sentence.

980 **Mr Taylor:** But we have worked closely with them in the children's homes for the early
interventions, from visiting – I guess giving the first warning to the young people – to restorative
work, getting the kids to do jobs, all sorts of stuff to avoid them getting to court. They have been
pretty flexible with working with us in that, really.

985 **Q186. The Chair:** And back to that family time, sitting down at the table and doing all of those
very corporate-parent things ... I am trying to figure out how to word this best. There are so many
documentaries, so many news articles, scholarly articles, about reoffending, with some individuals
coming back into the system because that support network, that routine ... They do not get that
outside of where they are. Do you find that with some young individuals who are coming back
through, they are looking for that again?

990 **Ms Coole:** Sadly, yes, we have worked with several individuals who have had a high number of
admissions and they do see it as a place of safety. We have had young people who have classed
the staff team as ... feeling like they are their family and feeling like the building is their home, and
that is where they feel safe and secure.

995 **Q187. Mr Peters:** I suppose that is dangerous for you, though. You do not want to create a
dependency, really, do you?

1000 **Ms Coole:** No, and we work tirelessly with young people to try and support them back into the community, but if that community is not meeting their needs we have had young people who would come under that.

1005 **Q188. The Chair:** How do you manage that balance, then, between needing to take on the part of a corporate parent and not creating the dependency? It seems like it might be a bit of a tightrope to walk.

Ms Coole: It is difficult. We do have rules and boundaries in the building. There are restrictions on young people, but unfortunately, for some young people that is better for them than what they have in the community, no matter what support we try to put in place for them.

1010 It is very difficult, but every time a young person comes back to us we treat them as a new admission. We would reassess their needs, look at them again, look at what we need to do to support them this time, to get them to remain out in the community. But no, it can be difficult.

1015 **Q189. The Chair:** It must be more difficult, I would imagine, for a young person, who may have had their own adverse childhood experiences, if you are looking at that in terms of a prison landscape, which is a far different arena. But there is a degree of comfort, isn't there, and there is relationship building and everything else. That must be more difficult for a young person to detach themselves from than an adult offender who feels much the same way about going through the prison system.

1020 **Ms Coole:** Yes, and we have worked with young people to try to withdraw from that, so we would offer them support going out into the community, but then slowly try and withdraw from that for them to support themselves. Sometimes that will work, but other times we have young people who will just come back into us.

1025 **Q190. The Chair:** In terms of those who do have ACIS is enough money being spent in that area by Government? Is there enough support in the third sector for these individuals?

1030 **Mr Taylor:** Housing is a main issue, finding somewhere for them to live. That is a major issue. Employment is a major issue.

Q191. The Chair: And that cliff edge with turning 18.

Mr Taylor: Yes, kids in care are very vulnerable to adults who want to exploit young people.

1035 **Q192. The Chair:** So again, in an ideal world, if money were to be spent by Government in order to support these individuals not finding their way either into Cronk Sollysh or finding their way into the Prison once they hit the age of 18, what would that look like for you?

1040 **Ms Coole:** I think it would be about those opportunities to give them purpose for their day, to make them feel safe and secure in the community, which would be through affordable housing, through access to employment, through access to education, training programmes and apprenticeship schemes, just to try to make them feel secure; having a support network around them that does not become a dependency but that they use as a support for as and when they need it, so they feel safe and secure.

1045 **Q193. The Chair:** But housing is the most critical of those?

Ms Coole: Yes, I would say housing is.

Mr Taylor: Housing and employment.

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Q194. Mr Peters: We are all here to try to find ways to improve the way that we deal with young people. I am guessing, from what you said earlier on, that operationally you like the idea of the Youth Justice Team as was, and that that may be something we ought to look back towards.

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Mr Taylor: Yes.

Q195. Mr Peters: What about legislation, though? Do we need a different set of legislation to aid that kind of progress?

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Mr Taylor: That is a question!

Q196. Mr Peters: Or are there any areas that you think we are particularly short on?

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Mr Taylor: That is a question, isn't it, really, legislation, yes? I guess my initial response is working together and making people accountable for their responsibilities. As I said before, quite often people run away when kids come to our services, when it is about making them accountable and bringing them back. If that takes legislation, then yes, it would work, but I do not think it will, really. I guess it is responsibility.

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Q197. The Chair: I suppose they already have legislated for that with the Justice Reform Bill, haven't they, really, to a degree, so we will see how they act on it.

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Mr Taylor: I can see it from everybody's point of view. If you are a teacher and you have struggled with this kid for such a long time and all of a sudden he is out of your class, you will think, 'My God, great!' and the last thing you will want is me nagging you to have him back in your class. I can understand that, but as kids they have a right to other services. Whatever has happened to them in their lives and however they act, they have a right to those services and that is really what we need to keep fighting for.

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Q198. The Chair: Again, in an ideal world, with housing, what would you like to see?

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Mr Taylor: It is very difficult for our young people to get on the housing ladder, to get accepted by the local housing ... That is really challenging for them. As I am sure for everybody in the community, the problem is the most massive waiting lists, but it is about what we can find in the interim while they get ready for social housing to be available.

Q199. Mr Peters: Is there a case for maybe a halfway-house type of ...?

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Ms Coole: Yes.

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Mr Taylor: Yes. The fear of that is having ... We run some services like that in London and they can quite often become, for want of a better word, a ghetto for young people. We have some services that have as many as 20 young people between 18 and 21, and that is when you get copied behaviour, the joint offending and things like that. So, yes, it would be great, but in a different type of model, a smaller model, really.

Q200. Mr Peters: Yes, five or six.

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Mr Taylor: It would be cheaper to put 20 kids in an old bed and breakfast, but the dangers you would have with that would be really significant, so smaller homes. It goes back to children's

homes in the 1960s and 1970s. Children's homes used to have 30-40 kids in them. Now we do not have more than four kids in a children's home because it makes you work better, is more direct and you get more from the young people when you work like that, rather than competing with 30 other kids.

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Q201. The Chair: Just breaking down the age groups, then: you have under-16s – so a 15-year-old would be supported by St Christopher's in various different ways, but then you have the 16-year-olds and 17-year-olds and then that cliff edge, (*Mr Taylor:* Yes.) and then 18. It does seem quite fragmented, doesn't it, really, for those young individuals with cliff edges sat through those age groups?

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Ms Coole: We do have an Aftercare Team, who work with young people from 18 up to 25 – care leavers and other young people in the community – but I know they have difficulties in accessing affordable, suitable housing for young people. I think one of the most difficult parts of their job is to find accommodation for these young people somewhere safe, so they are not sofa-surfing or staying at different friends' houses every night; it makes them vulnerable. They are at risk of exploitation or turning to offending, because you have no other way to make money if you are struggling to access employment; if you have not got a permanent address, you are going to struggle with accessing employment. It spirals for those young people, and that is where they are really vulnerable and could be at risk of turning to offending.

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Mr Taylor: We have added an additional service, which we call Staying Close, where, when they fall off that cliff edge, they can still come back to us any time they want.

We have had some kids who have lived in our homes for four, five, six years; you do not ever forget that. We certainly have one lad who comes back every Sunday with his dirty washing, gets his Sunday dinner, gets his washing done and goes back to his bedsit. A couple of years ago we would not have been allowed to allow that, but how can you stop a young person doing that when he has lived in the home for six years and he has built relationships with the staff? So we have the Staying Close service, where whoever would want to can meet people who have been key people in their lives, and we would encourage our staff to spend time with them.

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Q202. The Chair: Thank you. The single highest priority for Tynwald then, I suppose, would be sorting out the housing situation on the public and private sector side of things – or just the public sector?

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Ms Coole: Yes, and the private sector. My understanding is our Aftercare Team have very few private landlords who are willing to rent accommodation to our young people, and one of their biggest tasks is to find these young people somewhere safe to live.

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Q203. Mr Peters: And those who are might not be the best properties.

Ms Coole: Yes, and I think there are lots of –

Mr Taylor: – examples of that.

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Q204. The Chair: Perhaps the Landlord and Tenant Act might improve the situation.

Ms Coole: Hopefully.

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Mr Taylor: Can I add another thing for Tynwald?

Q205. The Chair: You may.

1155 **Mr Taylor:** I just think we need to do a lot of work about changing the stigma of young people who are in care, not just with Tynwald but with our communities, because I think that is really vital.

1160 Having worked with kids in care for so long, it mortifies me that people have this impression of kids that is not true. We need to start talking about good stories, nice stories, good things that have happened with kids, because we only ever hear when things go wrong. That is something I think Tynwald could take forward in celebrating some of the fantastic work we have done with kids, not just the bad stuff.

Ms Coole: We have some kids who have made great achievements in life, who we have looked after, and I guess we need to sing about that a little bit louder.

1165 **Q206. The Chair:** Can you give us examples of those without giving names away?

1170 **Mr Taylor:** I can give you an example. We have talked about a lad who got a two-and-a-half-year sentence in the secure home. He did his GCSEs, did all his qualifications in the secure home and had an amazing transition back to his community; and some four years after, a member of staff went for an interview for a new mortgage and it was he who interviewed her for a new mortgage. So that was somebody who had really taken advantage of all the services that we had. He interviewed staff who had looked after him when he was in the secure home – and she got the mortgage. *(Laughter)*

1175 So, yes, it is stories like that, and we are in a really wonderful place to see the good stories. I see people all the time. I have worked with people who have made a difference. We see it all the time. We are in a really good place to do that; our services in the UK are not. Once a kid leaves ... They are never going to see a kid again in London, but wherever we go on the Island we are bumping into people and you can see that actually we have made a difference for them.

1180 **Q207. Mr Peters:** Do you have PR people within the charity who could maybe help do that?

Mr Taylor: Yes, we do, we have a Communication Team.

1185 **Q208. Mr Peters:** The community loves stories like that.

Mr Taylor: Yes, we have a Communication Team. The media are not always supportive, because they like to write the other stories, don't they, **(Mr Peters: Yes.)** and it has been a challenge getting it ... It has been a bit of a passion of mine for the last –

1190 **Q209. The Clerk:** What about the attitude of the young people themselves? As you said, there is a stigma and maybe they do not wish to be in the public eye as a success story of the care system.

1195 **Mr Taylor:** Yes, that would be ideal, it would be fantastic, if we could find somebody who is confident enough to do that, but most of our young people do not want to tell people they have been in care, and that is pretty difficult.

1200 We did some work a couple of years ago around 'missings'. As you know, young people missing has been a problem. We made a video about it. It is on our website – I do not know if you have seen it on our website. The key girl in that we took around a number of conferences in the UK, and she spoke with me at a number of conferences about how we develop the missing process to benefit the young people and keep young people safe. We went to a number of conferences with her, but she has moved on now. She is, I do not know, 25 now and happily married with kids of her own and facing the challenges.

1205 **Q210. The Chair:** Another success story there, nonetheless.

Mr Taylor: Yes.

1210 **Q211. The Chair:** Is there anything else you would like to say that you have not been given the opportunity to speak about? In other words, have we not asked the right questions?

Ms Coole: No, I do not think so.

1215 **Mr Taylor:** No. I just want to reiterate that we do some great work with the Police, and again that is not always recognised. I cannot underestimate the MAPPU team enough; they are amazing with us. If we have any issues, certainly around exploitation, they respond immediately. And any issues, again they are a really open group to go to.

1220 **Q212. The Chair:** Just as a final question – and simply because the Chief Constable was quite keen to tell us about the exploitation of children, particularly in terms of sexual exploitation as well – what kind of situation do you see? What experience of that have you seen with some of the kids or adolescents who are either going into care or are in care, or are going into Cronk Sollysh?

1225 **Mr Taylor:** We have worked, sadly, with a number of kids who have been exploited by males, drug dealers, for sexual activity. They do not understand they are being exploited; that is the problem. It is a life choice they have made, but as 15-year-olds it is not a life choice they can make; it is against the law. They are being abused and exploited by people, and that is the challenge that we have. I would not say it is a weekly challenge, but it is certainly every now and again.

1230 We have a young person at the moment who is extremely vulnerable, and we are doing a lot of work to try to keep her safe. It is great us trying to keep her safe, but she has to learn to keep herself safe and she has to learn to make that decision: 'Actually, I am being exploited, they are taking advantage of me; they are buying me these things for the wrong reasons.'

1235 **Q213. The Chair:** Over in the UK, obviously we have a number of different examples to look at. Rotherham would be a very famous one of those. Do you see similar veins cropping up on the Isle of Man? And also, do you think that Government's response to it is the most appropriate response to it? Are those who are working into Manx Care ...? Is that the correct response, or is there a culture change needed?

1240 **Mr Taylor:** From the start of COVID two years ago, the risk was increasing from exploitation and we had a number of people who were pretty vulnerable. We challenged that with Manx Care and we set up what is called a Complex Abuse Group, where key professionals meet on a monthly basis and we look at joint practices, what we can do differently, how we can keep young people safe and how we can educate them. I have to say that group has worked tirelessly and made a difference.

1245 An example I can give you is where one of our staff had reported a car that had turned up at a children's home, which a girl ran into and disappeared. They got the registration and within minutes the Police had stopped the car, challenged the driver and put pressure on the driver. That would not happen anywhere in the UK. The girl was high risk on our list and was high risk on the police list from this Complex Abuse Group, and we had an agreement – 'If there are any issues, phone this number straightaway.' The Police responded meticulously. They would follow up, going to whoever's house it was: 'Do you know your son has turned up at this place and he has picked this girl up? She is only 14. What are you doing about it?' The Police tell me they would not get away with it in the UK, but they get away with it over here.

1255 The response has just been amazing from them. It does not remove the problem, but it removes them from our vulnerable kids. Where they go next I guess is another question, but I

think what the Police say is it paints the picture that it is not easy to exploit kids on the Isle of Man because they will do something about it, and I really believe that group has worked tremendously to support that.

1260 **Q214. The Chair:** How long has that been around for?

Mr Taylor: About two years.

Q215. The Chair: And how regularly does it meet?

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Mr Taylor: It meets every six weeks and it feeds into a more senior group, whose name I cannot remember.

Q216. The Chair: So you will let us know down the line when you do?

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Mr Taylor: Yes. We deal with the hands-on stuff, I suppose, and then when it goes to the next stage we feed it to this more senior group. It is the Complex Abuse Group and the ... something similar to that, anyway.

1275 **Ms Coole:** We have taken a focus at Cronk Sollysh as well on learning about exploitation of children. I have undertaken a couple of training courses, just online; it is a look into county lines in the UK. I have done a couple of training courses just to build my knowledge, because the young people we are getting in are likely to have been exploited, so we are trying to look at the signs and also how we can support them to see that themselves.

1280 We were also asked to put together a presentation, which we delivered to the Department of Education safeguarding leads for all the schools. It was really an awareness presentation that gave some of the vocabulary that young people are using to talk about drugs, the trafficking and the movement of drugs and the money, just so teachers' awareness was raised about some of the language that young people might be using, which they could pick up in a corridor or hear in a classroom and which might be able to trigger a concern being raised that that young person might be at risk. We delivered two presentations to the safeguarding leads, which were actually really well received.

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Mr Taylor: Exploitation is loads of pieces of a jigsaw that do not often get put together, but the idea of this Complex Abuse Group is that we can put all the pieces together, so instead of being in our silos and having little bits of the jigsaw, we can all put it together and then get a bigger picture of how we can keep these young people safe.

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Q217. The Chair: And again, would you say that the work of the Youth Justice Team – as opposed to MAPPU and any other groups that may bring together joint working – would have done the best work there?

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Mr Taylor: Yes. I would have seen them highly involved in that group and being a major part of that group.

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The Speaker: I have nothing left to ask. Do either of our Clerks or Mr Peters? No. Thank you very much for your time. (**Ms Coole:** Thank you.) We will now sit in private.

The Committee sat in private at 3.48 p.m.