Oberstown
Children Detention Campus

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

About Oberstown

Oberstown Children Detention Campus (Oberstown) is Ireland's national facility for the detention of children remanded or sentenced by the courts. Located in a rural location outside Lusk, Co Dublin, the campus has custom-built premises comprising residential accommodation units for young people as well as education, recreation, visiting, medical and other facilities.

In fulfilment of national law and policy, Oberstown accommodates young people up to the age of 18-and-a-half years on detention or remand orders, providing them with care and education in a safe and secure environment, while helping them to address offending behaviour and preparing them to return successfully to their families and communities.

In 2025, Oberstown was authorised to accommodate a maximum of 40 boys and 6 girls. The average daily occupancy was 39 young people and, over the course of 2025, there were 119 young people detained on the campus (115 male, 4 female).

Primary legislation

Oberstown operates under the Children Act 2001 (the Act), as amended, under the auspices of the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE).

Oberstown is governed by a Board of Management appointed by the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality under sections 164 to 167 of the Act.

Section 180 of the Act affirms that young people in Oberstown are in the care of the Director who has "like control over the child as if he or she were the child's parent or guardian" and who shall "do what is reasonable…in all the circumstances…for the purpose of safeguarding or promoting the child's…health, development or welfare".

Principal objective

Section 158 of the Act states that the principal objective of Oberstown is to provide appropriate educational and training programmes and facilities for children having regard to their health, safety, welfare and interests, including their physical, psychological and emotional wellbeing.

National policy

Oberstown is accountable to the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality for the implementation of relevant national policy in this area. The Youth Justice Strategy 2021-2027 makes specific references to the role of Oberstown in the youth justice system, assigning lead or co-responsibility to Oberstown for several strategic actions.

www.oberstown.com

About this report

The Board of Management at Oberstown Children Detention Campus is proud to present its Annual Report 2025 to the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality, Norma Foley TD, and to all our stakeholders.

The Board is required to assure the Minister and her department that Oberstown is fully compliant with the Children Act 2001, with relevant national law and policy and the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016).

This document fulfils this requirement and is a public record of the operation of Oberstown in 2025, along with a selection of the events and developments in the service during the year.

Note: the Financial Statements of Oberstown Children Detention Campus for the year 1 January to 31 December 2025, and its Statement on Internal Controls for the same period, are published as a separate document alongside the Annual Report 2025 on the Oberstown website (www.oberstown.com) following completion of the audit by the Office of the Comptroller & Auditor General (C&AG). The Annual Report is usually published in June; the Financial Statements go online later in the year, typically in December.

Contents

Cover image – The Oberstown apiary is a step forward for environmental education, sustainability and biodiversity on campus. Pictured: Tadeusz Szczesniak, Night Supervising Officer and qualified beekeeper

See page 46

'Oberstown is one service within the broader childcare and youth justice system, making these partnerships critical to the work to ensure that custody is a last resort in Ireland.'

Chair's foreword p4

'That's the thing about in here, you get offered chances that you don't get on the outside.'

4 Chair's foreword

6 Campus population quick facts 2025

8 Director's overview

10 Life on campus – young people's views

12 Advocacy & young people's participation

16 Young people's programmes 2025

22 Education & activities

26 Health & in-reach partnerships

30 Hope rising – The role of the chaplain at Oberstown

32 Oberstown governance and management

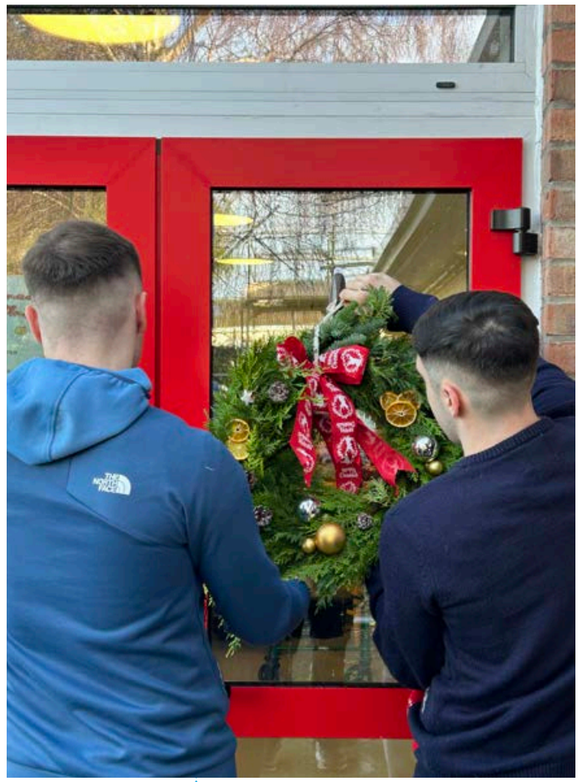
43 Business and compliance overview 2025

46 Environmental and sustainability 2025

50 Working at Oberstown

56 2025 Year in the Life

62 Appendices



56 YEAR IN THE LIFE

Highlights on campus and beyond

30 HOPE RISING – THE ROLE OF THE CHAPLAIN AT OBERSTOWN

26 HEALTH & IN-REACH PARTNERSHIPS

46 ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY 2025

Chair's foreword

Welcome to another busy and successful year at Oberstown Children Detention Campus. As you read this report, I hope you are struck by the depth of the work undertaken – by the extraordinary staff team and those from partner organisations – to ensure that the young people are treated with respect and care and provided with a range of activities and programmes that support them to have a positive future that reduces the likelihood of them returning to the campus.

During 2025, the Board of Management has worked to improve our engagement with staff, seeking to build on our understanding of their experiences of working on the campus. An independent culture review was completed, identifying the actions needed to ensure that our staff continue to feel safe and respected and we look forward to reporting on the progress made in future reports.

The voice of the young people remains a priority in Oberstown and the Board of Management continues to be part of this process, meeting with young people regularly to hear their views of the service they receive, which this year has ranged from consistency of care to meals. This has supported members of the Board to provide more effective oversight and governance of the organisation which we will, of course, continue.

There have been many highlights during 2025, alongside challenges. A major challenge remains the occupancy levels with a more than a two-fold increase in the number of days where there was a maximum of 40 boys on the campus. At all times, they had to be cared for within the context of maintaining safe staffing levels.

Recruiting residential care workers remains a significant challenge, one that is not unique to Oberstown. The Board has been monitoring the situation and we have welcomed creative responses presented by the Senior Management Team. Recruitment challenges are likely to be a constant feature of the campus for some time; we remain determined to continue to recruit staff who are skilled and passionate about working with this group of young people and committed to the children's rights ethos of Oberstown.

The annual HIQA inspection continues to reflect the impact of the pressures on Oberstown of the high number of young people and staffing levels, with areas of improvement identified. The report noted progress made and the fact that young people and their families were very satisfied with the service provided. Improvements in staff management and support, along with restrictive practices, remain priority areas for the campus.

Oberstown cannot operate without the many partnerships and collaborations in place and we are grateful to all those who provide regular services on campus enhancing young people's daily care, as well as those offering support when young people return to the community. Oberstown is one service within the broader childcare and youth justice system, making these partnerships critical to the work to ensure that custody is a last resort in Ireland.

During the year we reviewed the Children's Rights Policy Framework (CRPF), which outlines the rules governing the care of the children at Oberstown. We consulted staff, young people and partner organisations, which confirmed the continued relevance of the rules, which remained largely unchanged. However, partner organisations reminded us of the importance of ongoing support for young people when they leave the campus.

On behalf of the Board, I want to express our gratitude to all our staff colleagues who worked tirelessly to make sure that they built a safe home for the 119 young people in our care during the year.

I would also like to thank my Board colleagues for their continued support, diligence and commitment to Oberstown.

The Board of Management are very proud of the work outlined in this report, which often just represents the highlights. As I read it I am left with many thoughts that will influence my work as Chair of the Board, some of which include the disproportionate number of young people from the Traveller community, the increase in the number of days of full occupancy, the stewardship of the physical environment, the resilience of staff and, finally, the importance of a cup of coffee and cupcake both expertly made.

Koulla Yiasouma
Chair, Board of Management

"Oberstown cannot operate without the many partnerships and collaborations in place and we are grateful to all those who provide regular services on campus enhancing young people's daily care, as well as those offering support when young people return to the community."

Campus population quick facts 2025

In 2025, Oberstown was authorised to accommodate a maximum of 46 young people (40 male and 6 female). The figures presented here give an overview of the campus population across 2025, alongside comparison figures for 2024 and three-year averages.

Number of young people detained on remand or detention orders

	2025	2024	*3-year average*
	119	120	123
	115	118	120
	4	2	3
In Oberstown 31/12/24	40	27	34
Admissions	79	93	89
Detention orders	72	63	65
Remand orders	47	57	58

Average daily population

	2025	2024	3-year average
	39	39	38
Remand	12	16	14
Detention	27	23	24

Average age

2025	2024	3-year average
16	16	16

Days at full male occupancy

2025	2024	3-year average
137	62	76

Total care nights

2025	2024	3-year average
14,235	14,274	13,761

Number of court escorts

2025	2024	3-year average
495	593	554

Onward placements

2025	2024	3-year average
95	96	102

Where?

Home	58	65	65
Residential Care	11	9	12
Other	9	9	11
Irish Prison Service	17	13	14

County of origin

As Ireland's only children detention facility, Oberstown accommodates young people from all around Ireland. The largest proportion come from Dublin – 30% in 2025, with Cork, Limerick and Waterford combined accounting for a further 32%. Members of the Traveller community made up 26% of Oberstown's total population in 2025, up 5% from 2024 and 3% above the 3-year average.

Director's overview

As we reflect on 2025, I wish to pay a personal tribute to our friend and colleague Bill Briody who lost his lengthy battle with illness on 2 November 2025. Our own gentle giant is sadly missed by all who had the pleasure to know him. A death in service can challenge any organisation. However, the response from colleagues was phenomenal and indicative of the individual Bill was and the legacy he has left within Oberstown. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis.

The ongoing development of the campus would not be possible without the continued support of the Board of Management, the Department, stakeholder engagement, and the collective responsibility that our staff team take in sustaining service delivery. The progress within our strategic plan supports this, along with our ISO validations and largely positive inspections and audits across all functions.

In 2025, we became much more aware of the cultural diversity of young people on campus, and our need to be culturally competent across race, ethnicity and religion. This afforded both our Education and Programmes teams opportunities to develop interventions appropriate to the individual needs of young people on campus. Within this cohort, unfortunately yet again we see the over-representation of young people identifying as Traveller. This key issue has been the focus of some of our work, with initiatives progressed through stakeholder events and close collaboration with the Traveller Justice Initiative.

Toxic masculinity is an emerging trend, and we have developed appropriate responses through our Programmes team and in collaborative projects. In one notable example, we engaged with EPIC – Empowering People In Care along with the Oberstown Campus School to help young people engage with and explore this complex subject matter. The result is a comic book, due for publication in early 2026, which represents young people's thinking on some of the key issues affecting their peer group in the community. Programmes to address sexually harmful behaviour, developed in collaboration with NIAPP (the National Interagency Prevention Programme) continued to be developed and delivered across the year. Our thinking and networking in this field was further enhanced by attending the NOTA (National Organisation for the Treatment of Abuse) annual conference in Belfast in May.

From a stakeholder perspective, the campus continues to extend its reach, nationally and internationally, with the objective of influencing and effecting change in the youth detention landscape. We hosted several stakeholder events to address high profile issues in youth justice today, including the principle of detention as a last resort, alternatives to detention, the over-representation of Travellers and the low numbers of females in youth detention. The question of a lead Youth Justice Agency has also been tabled. A highpoint of our national engagement came in the final quarter of the year when Oberstown was the lead partner of the 11th Irish Criminal Justice Agencies (ICJA) conference, 'Youth Justice in Motion: Prevention, Intervention, Contribution'. This was a highly effective conference, which challenged some of the current thinking around young people in conflict with the law. The venue was an additional bonus, as the Irish Museum of Modern Art holds special memories for us.

"the campus continues to extend its reach, nationally and internationally, with the objective of influencing and effecting change in the youth detention landscape."

Internationally, we continue to engage with Penal Reform International. A key theme in 2025 was protecting the rights of young people in the digital age, specifically in the context of video link court appearances. Our international engagement peaked in June when the campus was involved in the delivery of three workshops at the 5th World Congress on Justice with Children. One of the workshops, co delivered with colleagues from the Ombudsman for Children's Office, emphasised the value of young people's voices as a key driver in the development of the court accompaniment service for young people in conflict with the law.

In Q2 2025, we faced a testing time through incidents involving some young people with extremely complex and significant behavioural challenges. Regrettably, some staff members were injured in these incidents. However, the resilience of the staff team shone through in terms of their professionalism and capacity to do the right thing – a central tenet of our work in Oberstown. This resilience is enabled by the power and value of our campus employee support service, peer support workers and practice supervision processes – key success factors across the year which come to the fore during challenging times. These isolated incidents were the subject of some erroneous and sensationalist media coverage which was very unsettling for our staff team and for the wider Oberstown community. However, the record was corrected when the relevant and appropriate facts were made public at the highest level, in the Oireachtas.

It is remarkable that the progress and developments set out in this report have occurred against a backdrop of increased demand, increased occupancy, legislative challenges and a very difficult recruitment environment. The capacity for the campus to sustain service delivery, grow and develop while influencing best practice both nationally and internationally, is evidence of the collective responsibility and collective stewardship that allows all who live and work here to maximise their potential. This creates a platform for further innovation in 2026 and beyond.

One innovative project established on campus in 2025 is a case in point. The Oberstown bee project is symbolic of our responsibility to lead beyond our authority, to influence and push for progress. The words of the Roman Emperor and philosopher, Marcus Aurelius, come to mind: "That which is not good for the beehive cannot be good for the bees." This speaks to the interconnectedness of the beehive and the bee; if the beehive is thriving, so too is the bee. We link this to young people and society. If we can get ahead of this, if we can allow young people thrive in their community, all of society benefits and then, maybe, the principle of detention as a last resort can be supported and embedded in society.

Damien Hernon
Director

LIFE ON CAMPUS YOUNG PEOPLE'S VIEWS

Life on campus for young people revolves around their residential unit, school, afterschool activities and working towards milestones on their individual journey through care. Building relationships with staff and peers – and taking opportunities for personal development – are central to positive outcomes.

In this outline of life on campus, young people offer insights into their Oberstown experience.

Unit life

Oberstown's single-storey residential units house a maximum of eight young people. Each young person has their own bedroom with en suite facilities and a TV screen. The units are run as households, with social areas including a lounge, kitchen and dining area, and multi-purpose recreation rooms where young people can play video games, watch movies and take phone calls in private. Each unit also has an outdoor exercise space.

Young people often note the differences between life on remand and in the committal units.

"It's better to be in committal than remand, because [in remand] there's new kids coming in and you don't know how they are and what to expect."

"I didn't really mind remand. I liked seeing the new faces and I was used to the staff. Felt more at home."

Learning how to get along with peers and staff is key.

"Making friends, it's not the easiest. But when you're living in the same unit with everyone, you kind of build a friendship with all the people in the unit. It just happens because you're so used to being beside them the whole time."

Ratings system

Oberstown's rating system encourages young people to be aware of their behaviour, with higher ratings leading to a wider range of options and choice in the kind of activities open to them on campus. On the unit, the young person's rating level affects them in several ways, including pocket money allowance, job allocation, the number of phone calls allowed, and bedtime.

"You have to earn your trust. You just don't get trust, [by] clicking your fingers. You have to earn your trust on the unit."

"The ratings help, they push you on. If there was no rating system you'd get in trouble all the time, you get me? You'd be fighting all the time, giving cheek to people."

"If you lose your level, you're going to bed maybe 30 minutes before all the other lads – and time just goes quicker when you're up there chatting to the lads."

"It's a discipline as well. That's why the lads would learn from their mistakes and that's what would push them more to getting back to that [higher] level."

School

After breakfast in their unit, each young person goes to school from Monday to Friday.

Morning sessions of three lessons lead up to lunch back in the unit, with a further two lessons in the afternoon.

"I'm not good at reading and writing. But I try to work on it and get help with it, inside school. I know friends came in here and they wouldn't be able to read or write, and when they come out they're brilliant readers and writers."

"I'm doing my Leaving Cert this year. My plan was to quit [when] on the outside. But I got motivation to do it in here. There's lads in here that'd like to do the Junior Cert and Leaving Cert, maybe go get an apprenticeship on the outside or something. So they'd be working on that stuff and the teachers would be giving them as much help as they need."

"I think Oberstown was kind of a gift to me, to be honest with you. I've changed a lot. Yeah."

Afterschool activities

Activities run each weekday evening from 4pm to 7.30pm, catering for a wide range of sporting, creative and vocational skills and interests (see page 24).

"I like activities, you've got a load of things to do and it makes the day go quicker in general."

"I like to do the gym, boxing, triathlon. There's a lot of fun stuff you can do – art, woodwork, music, home ec, football on the Astro."

"I went strict on my diet, working on myself. I've done better than I expected. I've seen improvements, especially when it comes to quitting all the drugs I've done on the outside. I remember on the outside I'd only be able to run for, like, maybe two minutes or something. Now I'm here, I can do 5ks in about 25 minutes, you know? It's just a big improvement."

Relationship with staff

Each young person has a key worker appointed from their unit staff team. Daily life on campus involves interaction with a range of people, some providing specific services for young people and others focused on campus maintenance and operational support services.

"At Oberstown they have a load of supports, a lot of people to talk to. There's always staff to talk to when there's any problems and you'll always be referred if you need help. They have problem solving as well. They support you, they help you with a lot of things. [When you have a problem] they'd help you cope and like help you work forward."

"Sometimes things aren't good and you might be having a standoff when they ask you to go into your room and you tell the staff you're not moving. I'd rather just walk down to my room there. Talk it through. The staff still come down to check in and make sure you're alright. Do you get me?"

Making progress

Each young person has an individual plan for their stay covering all aspects of the CEHOP® framework (Care, Education, Health, Offending behaviour and Preparation for leaving). Young people attend placement planning meetings (PPMs) every six weeks to review progress. Oberstown chairs the PPM; attendees include the young person, residential unit staff, teachers and external partners with a role in the young person's return to the community or onward placement. Family members or guardians attend, either in person or via phone or video link.

"You can have a say and staff can have a say and most of the time it's 50-50. Like it's not just staff, you have a say. You feel listened to in those meetings."

"It's good to find out what you're doing bad and what you're doing right. They ask do you need anything and if you want anything you can bring that up in your PPM."

"A few weeks ago I had my PPM. And I was telling them that I'd like to find a place so I can start an apprenticeship when I get out, if they could help me with that. Sort of give us months to prepare everything. So I'd say, yeah, it does prepare you for when you're leaving."

Positive change

Oberstown provides the supports, but it is up to young people to take them up to explore their possibilities and bring about change.

"It's the young person's decision, whether they want to work on themselves or do the complete opposite."

"My mother used to tell me I'd walk around the house like a zombie sometimes going down to the kitchen, getting some food for myself. I'd always be stoned out of my head. Because I got off all the drugs, I'm completely sober now, I sleep better. I used to need drugs to help me fall asleep at night. And now I fall asleep like a baby. So when I come out of this place, I don't even think I'm gonna go near drugs in my life again, because how much it affected me."

"I've learned so much stuff in here, I can clean my room, I can wash my own clothes now. I've learned how to cook in this place. I've learned life skills that will help me in the future, especially helping my mum."

"I think Oberstown was kind of a gift to me, to be honest with you. I've changed a lot. Yeah."

Advocacy & young people's participation

Oberstown's rights-based approach commits to supporting young people to have their say in decisions that affect them on campus and to have their voices and opinions heard and respected.

In 2025, Oberstown conducted a major review of the Children's Rights Policy Framework (CRPF). The project, led by the Board of Management's CRPF Review Group, involved consultation with young people and staff on campus, the Board and external stakeholders. The Review Group determined that the CRPF's 12 Rules (see Appendix 4) remain a good framework for ensuring a rights-based and child-centred approach to the care of young people in Oberstown. No gaps were identified in the 12 Rules as part of the review. A revised CRPF document was approved by the Board and sent to DCDE for consideration and sign-off by the Minister.

The Advocacy Officer coordinated and ensured the involvement of young people in the CRPF review by:

- Holding focus sessions on the CRPF review with young people.
- Providing input on CRPF perspective to the unit guidebook.
- Facilitating the development of the Norms of Good Behaviour as devised by young people under Rule 8 ("Positive Behaviour") of the 12 Rules.
- Launching the Norms of Good Behaviour.

Advocacy activities

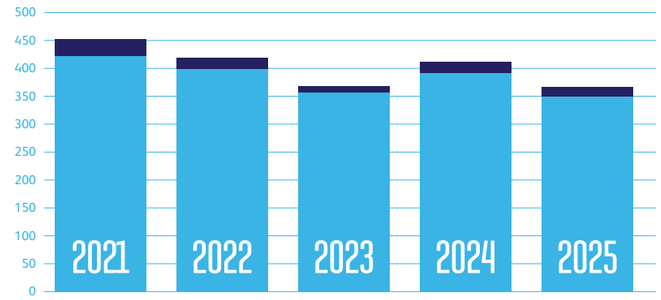
Oberstown's Advocacy Officer, Gráinne Smyth, helps connect young people with campus management and the Board. The role also involves working with organisations in Ireland, Europe, and beyond to share learning and promote good practice in protecting the rights of children and young people.

In 2025, the Advocacy Officer worked closely with external organisations, including regular day-to-day partners who provide services on campus and in the community. This work included bringing young people's voices into discussions, as well as supporting research and sharing learning to help promote detention as a last resort and protect children's rights in online court appearances. This work included:

- Liaising with EPIC (Empowering People in Care) to explore new opportunities for engagement with Oberstown young people and provide new services to the campus, resulting in new engagement with the young people during afterschool activities and attendance at the young people's exit placement planning meetings (PPMs).
- Establishing a weekly meeting with the Oberstown Campus School Principal to discuss advocacy issues raised by the young people.
- Providing feedback on the perspective of young people to Fiosrú, the Office of the Police Ombudsman.
- Delivering training to Garda Case Managers as part of the Garda continuous professional development.
- Speaking at the Youth Advocate Programmes (YAP) conference and meeting with the Head Guardian ad Litem, to share how Oberstown approaches young people's participation on campus.
- Supporting two focus sessions on the potential of a Traveller Support Worker on the Oberstown campus in collaboration with Oberstown Campus School and the Traveller Justice Initiative.
- Facilitating access for researchers from Queen's University Belfast on detention as a last resort.
- Meeting with two groups of Malawian government and policy delegates, funded by an Irish law project in Malawi, to explore the Children's Rights Policy Framework and Irish youth justice legislation.

Advocacy issues & complaints

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021
Advocacy issues	349	394	358	399	422
Complaints	18	17	11	21	31



CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Throughout 2025, the Advocacy Officer engaged with Penal Reform International on Procedural Rights of Children in the Digital Age (PPRO-Child), a project with a specific focus on video link court appearances for young people and the implementation of Directive (EU) 2016/800. In Ireland, remote court participation for children is primarily used in cases where a young person is detained in Oberstown.

In addition to facilitating research on the experiences of Oberstown young people who participated in remote court appearances, the Advocacy Officer also participated in several PPRO-Child Project events, where she:

- Spoke at a workshop at the World Congress for Youth Justice in Madrid in June alongside Jérôme Mangelinckx, Global Policy Manager at Penal Reform International and Oscar O'Mara, Senior Research Fellow from Essex University
- Attended a two-day round table event with the PPRO-Child Project in October, with Oberstown hosting on the second day, including providing a live stream into Court 55 with the assistance of Justice Paul Kelly, President of the District Court.
- Travelled to a second-round table event in Bucharest in November, where she presented on children's experience of virtual hearings as part of informing EU policy on children's rights and remote hearings.

In December, the Advocacy Officer also began working with internal Oberstown teams to explore changes to enhance the current video link court IT system.

Shaping decisions

The Campus Council is the main forum for young people to participate in campus-wide decision making. With the help of the Advocacy Officer, the Campus Council met monthly in 2025 to share their views on a range of issues and provide direct input on activities that directly affect them:

- Meeting the Board of Management Young People's Committee.
- Reassessing the rating system and reviewing suggestions and feedback from the Ratings Review Group.
- Requesting that the responsibility for jobs and training allocations switch from their Unit Managers to become the responsibility of the Recreation and Training Lead.
- Agreeing on 'Norms of Good Behaviour' as an appendix to Rule 8 of the Children's Rights Policy Framework. They also advocated for the 'Norms of Good Behaviour' to serve as a guide for the rating system.
- Developing an information booklet for court. The Campus Council requested the development of a booklet to be sent to the courts and given to young people to provide reassurance.
- Agreeing to participate, with Hub na nÓg, in the United Nations periodic review on rights and the experience of young people in Ireland.
- Reviewing questions from 'Detention as a Last Resort' research produced by Kelly Razey of Queen's University Belfast.
- Discussing possible future research projects that benefit young people's lived experience, with Oberstown board member Martin Quigley.
- Requesting that two young people should join the Campus Nutrition Committee.

OBERSTOWN'S CHILD PROTECTION SERVICE

Oberstown has a Social Worker who is also the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) for Child Protection on campus. Each residential unit has a poster showing DLP Bill Byrne along with information on how young people or staff can report concerns about the safety of any young person. Bill meets with every young person who arrives on campus, whether new or returning. The DLP reports to the Board of Management monthly and meets with a Deputy Director monthly to review the DLP Database and facilitate managerial oversight of Child Protection matters.

In 2025, there were 156 matters referred to or followed up by the DLP in line with Campus policy and Children First legislation (down from 190 in 2024). Thirty-two of these matters were forwarded as Mandated Reports to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency (up from 27 in 2024). Only four of the reports referred to matters internal to Oberstown (down from 12 in 2024). Of these, two related to physical interventions by staff, one to an assault by one young person on another and the other an assault on a visiting child. Thirteen Mandated Reports related to allegations against Gardaí (up from eight in 2024). The DLP referred 16 matters to Fiosrú on behalf of young people.

It is important to have a voice, because if we have problems, we can bring it up at these meetings. It's better for us because we have a voice.

Young person

Young people's programmes 2025

Young people on campus take part in programmes aligned with their individualised CEHOP® care plan. These targeted courses and workshops aim to address the underlying factors that contribute to offending behaviour as well as promoting personal development and social skills. Some programmes are offence-specific, others offer broader perspectives and education on issues such as emotional regulation, healthy relationships, responsibility, and substance abuse.

The focus is on encouraging positive, prosocial behavioural change; young people work on subject matter that requires them to reflect on the factors that led them to being in Oberstown. Some welcome the opportunity for self-reflection and to start developing a new outlook. Others are instinctively reluctant to engage or to talk openly with people they do not know well about why they ended up in this situation.

As participation in programmes is voluntary, the fact that many young people choose to apply themselves to this challenging but ultimately rewarding work highlights the trust and relationship-building approach that underpins this key activity. Young people's programmes build on the daily interactions across the campus, covering everyone that the young person encounters in Oberstown. Programmes enhance the quality and strength of relationships on campus, equipping young people to develop life skills and acquire knowledge that will serve them well as productive members of their communities.

Young people are aware that engaging in programmes is viewed positively by the Courts, Probation Service or senior management at PPMs (placement planning meetings) when considering suitability for campus jobs, permitted absences or staying on past their 18th birthday. However, once they have engaged in one programme, they are generally happy to engage in more.

Feedback from young people who have completed numerous programmes in Oberstown in recent years emphasised three key factors that influence their willingness to engage: group dynamics, the need to be ready to engage in the work, and the perceived relevance of the material. The Oberstown Programmes team uses this feedback as input to programme planning and delivery.

Young people on remand who are new to the campus can initially be reluctant to engage in programmes, particularly if they are on a short period of remand. Recommendations from peers and unit staff help to overcome this reluctance, but the lack of certainty about how long young people will be on campus can affect their willingness or motivation to engage. Some young people who are nearing the end of their sentence or those who are turning 18 disengage from programmes, but most are happy to remain involved.

Programme delivery on campus is balanced alongside competing demands on young people's time, including court attendance, medical appointments, visits, activities and school. These factors can influence the uptake of programmes among young people, and the lack of a dedicated programmes space is an ongoing challenge.

Programme delivery

The Oberstown Programmes team has two dedicated programme facilitators who deliver most of the programmes on campus, either themselves or in collaboration with other internal or external stakeholders. These collaborations help cater to the individual needs of young people and strengthen relationships and understanding between various stakeholders.

Young people participate either in small groups or as individuals in specific targeted interventions. Some young people struggle in the group setting and work much better on a one-to-one basis.

Clinicians from the Tusla ACTS team support and direct the Programmes team in delivering targeted interventions in response to specific needs. The relationships programme facilitators build with the young people on campus make it easier to organise group work, focusing on those who are most compatible or who need more individual attention.

Key developments in 2025

An overview of the programmes delivered in 2025 is presented on pages 19 to 21. Key developments included:

Harmful sexual behaviour

Collaboration between Oberstown programme facilitators and NIAPP (the National Interagency Prevention Programme) progressed throughout 2025, including several joint team days. This collaboration has fostered a closer working relationship between programme facilitators and the ACTS team and the Probation Service. One member of the Programmes team attended the annual conference of NOTA (National Organisation for the Treatment of Abuse) in Belfast in May. The conference brings together professionals from across the UK and Ireland who work with young people with the goal of preventing sexual abuse and violence. The conference material and information is transferable and applicable in the delivery of young people's programmes on campus.

Oberstown programme facilitators engaged with the Consent Ed Project, a sexual violence prevention resource for young people, attending a symposium in March and completing training in April. One of the Oberstown facilitators joined the Consent Ed Advisory group which met several times during 2025. The aim is to develop a consent education programme for informal educational settings, as many of the current resources available are designed for use in schools. In October, Consent Ed project coordinators held consultation sessions with young people in Oberstown to help inform their development of the programme. Oberstown Programmes staff co-facilitated these sessions, which involved 12 young people. The goal is for Consent Ed to deliver a bespoke programme in Oberstown in 2026.

Online influence awareness

Developing sessions to assess the impact and influences of online content on young people was a key focus in 2025, with an emphasis on young people's identity as well as sexual violence prevention. The goal is to develop a more comprehensive set of resources to deliver bespoke programmes to young people based on their individual needs.

Staff attended training sessions, including: '12 Dialogues' by Men at Work, which looks at online influences and their impact on young men; 'BodyRights' and 'Let's Get Real' refresher training, covering updated material on issues such as consent and online behaviour; and Consent Ed training.

New material on sexual consent and harmful online behaviour was delivered to 10 young people in May. The sessions were a success, encouraging mature and honest reflection by the young people involved.

> **It helped me have an outlook on not only my part of it but my victim's part of it as well. Because I never really thought about it. Because it was kind of like just buried, I wanted to get over it, or because I wasn't in the right head space.**
>
> **Young person**

Victim empathy

Adjustments to the victim empathy programme in 2025 included delivering some parts of the programme individually rather than in groups, as well as ensuring that young people participating in the programme had previously engaged meaningfully in other programmes. These changes had a positive impact on engagement in the programme, resulting in the highest number of completions in a single year since the programme was introduced in 2017.

Young people on remand engaged with the Responsibility Programme workshops, developed in 2024 to allow young people on long-term remand the opportunity to engage in work around offending behaviour without the need to look at their own specific offences which would have excluded them from engaging in the victim empathy programme.

Solas Project

The Solas team continued to offer support to young people transferring to the Irish Prison Service (IPS) during 2025. Demand for this service increased during the year due to the number of young people on campus turning 18 before their sentence was completed. In March, Solas assigned more staff to their work in Oberstown, doubling the number of young people who could avail of the programme.

PROGRAMMES DELIVERED IN 2025

Victim empathy

Victim Empathy "What Have I Done?" is a practical approach to encouraging empathy in young people who hurt others through their behaviour. It challenges the young person to consider what they can do to help repair the harm they have caused. This programme is available to young people on a committal order who meet the criteria for inclusion. Not all young people on campus meet the criteria for inclusion and those on remand are not eligible.

Crinan Drug Relapse Prevention

A group work intervention that aims to teach participants how to examine the triggers for and the consequences of using drugs and alcohol. It supports young people to develop strategies for managing any stressors or triggers in their environment that may cause a relapse, and is therefore best suited to young people due for release shortly after completing the programme. The Crinan team also deliver workshops on harm reduction and drug awareness in order to involve some young people who are not able to participate in the full relapse prevention programme.

IPS Prison Transfer Programme – Wheatfield Proof

This programme supports young people through their transition from Oberstown to Wheatfield Prison by familiarising young people with what to expect upon arrival and during their time there. It is delivered by external facilitators from Solas Project, which provides a combination of pre- and post-release support services focused on reducing reoffending.

Baseline

The Baseline programme is an offence-specific programme focusing on harmful sexual behaviour. It is facilitated in conjunction with external stakeholder NIAPP (Tusla's community-based National Inter-Agency Prevention Programme), ACTS and the Probation Service. Baseline requires considerable and consistent commitment from the participants, covering topics including coping with emotions, pathways to offending behaviour, relationships and addictive behaviour. Participants are chosen in collaboration with stakeholders on and off campus. Modules not completed when a young person leaves Oberstown can be continued through NIAPP's community-based service.

Pro Social Driver Behaviour Programme

Pro Social Ireland delivers this programme, designed for any young person who has road traffic offences and is willing to challenge their driving behaviour. The programme aims to re-educate and rehabilitate participants by challenging established thinking patterns and attitudes, enhancing awareness and understanding of driving behaviour. Mechanics also work with young people to help increase their understanding of the technical and practical aspects of working with cars.

RSA Wrecked.ie Workshop

Wrecked.ie is a Road Safety Authority (RSA) initiative that uses real-life stories to tell the consequences of road traffic collisions and other life-changing events that happen on Irish roads. The workshops cover themes including driver distraction, drug driving, road users' impairment, driving without insurance, modified cars and driving when using a mobile phone.

Street Law

Delivered by trainee solicitors, Street Law is an initiative from the Law Society of Ireland aimed at promoting a better understanding of legal matters including equality and access to law. Street Law at Oberstown covers general information and legal terms, and rights and responsibilities during stop and search.

Responsibility Programme

A programme aimed at involving young people on long-term remand in productive discussions around how and when they take responsibility for their own actions. These workshops serve as an alternative offending behaviour programme for young people on long-term remand, and as a bridging programme for those who are not yet ready for more challenging group work.

Respect: Dating Detox

An evidence-based programme, developed by Respect, a UK-based domestic abuse charity. It supports young people to address issues around their behaviour in relationships. This work can be very challenging and is only suitable for delivery to young people who have experience of group work and have completed the core REAL U modules. It extends the work on boundaries and sexual consent, with more specific focus on jealousy in relationships, masculinity and what it means to be a man, dealing with anger and abusive behaviour, plus healthy attitudes towards conflict resolution within relationships.

Life Connections

Workshops by Life Connections feature open conversations about emotional, social and mental health issues, enhanced with the use of a sensory activity. The programme provides a safe space for young people to engage with an external professional psychotherapist through the medium of play.

REAL U

REAL U (Relationships Explored and Life Uncovered) is a personal development and sex education programme aimed at equipping young people with the skills, knowledge and confidence to develop healthy relationships and delay the onset of early sexual activity. The programme has six core modules, with electives on consent, sexually transmitted infections and contraception.

Decider Life Skills

Based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT), the programme addresses four core skill sets: Distress Tolerance, Mindfulness, Emotional Regulation and Interpersonal Effectiveness. The Decider's lifejacket metaphor is a fun and memorable way to introduce young people to the skills that keep them afloat when an "emotional emergency" occurs. Young people learn coping skills and develop the resilience required to deal with impulsive behaviours.

Crosscare Counselling

Crosscare counsellors provide individual addiction counselling to young people through one-to-one sessions on campus.

Street Doctors

Street Doctors is a registered charity run by volunteer junior doctors and medical students. They teach life-saving first aid to young people at risk of violent crime and drug use. Street Doctors also support young people by co-facilitating sexual health workshops on STIs and contraception.

Involve Mental Health workshops

Involve, an organisation providing youth work services to young Travellers in Ireland, delivered workshops for young people on campus in 2025.

Programme	No. of Young People	Facilitators
Victim Empathy - "What have I done?"	17	Oberstown Programmes team with support from Oberstown Designated Liaison Person in May and June
Responsibility programme	7	Oberstown Programmes team
Decider Life Skills	36	Oberstown Programmes team with support from a Residential Social Care Worker in May and June
REAL U: Relationships Explored and Life Uncovered **Core modules** **Elective modules:** Consent STI and Contraception Online behaviour	 28 16 11 10	Joint facilitation between the Oberstown Programmes team and Oberstown Campus School. Additional input from Street Doctors
Respect: Dating Detox Programme	3	Oberstown Programmes team
Pro Social Ireland Driver Behaviour Including Garage programme	8	External facilitators from Pro Social Ireland supported by the Oberstown Programmes team
Life Connections	55	External facilitator with supervision from the Oberstown Programmes team and Residential Social Care Workers
Mental health workshops	7	External facilitator from Involve, an organisation providing youth work services to young Travellers in Ireland
Crinan Drug Relapse Prevention **Workshops:** Harm reduction Drug awareness	12 7 7	External facilitators
IPS Prison Transfer Programme – Wheatfield-Proof	17	External facilitators from Solas Project
Baseline	4	External facilitator from NIAPP supported by Oberstown Programmes team, the Probation Service and ACTS
RSA Wrecked workshop	9	External facilitator from Road Safety Authority
Street Law workshops	14	External facilitators from the Law Society of Ireland supported by the Oberstown Programmes team
Crosscare counselling	25	External facilitators from Crosscare attending campus twice a week throughout the year

Education & activities

Every young person on campus goes to the Oberstown Campus School, centrally located at the heart of the campus, operated by the Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB).

The school ensures the national curriculum is available to all young people on campus, with learning plans tailored to individual needs. Subjects in the Junior and Senior cycles covered include: English, Irish, Maths, Science, PE, RE, Art, Engineering, Wood Technology, Home Economics, Business, SPHE, Geography, History, Politics & Society, Chemistry, Biology, Music.

In 2025, six young people achieved their Junior Certificate, studying: English, Maths, Art, History, Wood Technology, and Home Economics. Eight Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP) statements were achieved

The campus school also provides courses leading to Level 2, 3 and 4 certification in General Learning from QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland). Modules on offer: Communications, Functional Maths, Computer Literacy, Personal Effectiveness, Breakfast Cookery, Short Order Cookery, Craft (Pyrography, and Ceramics and Design), Textiles, Workshop Skills, Engineering, Health & Fitness, Art, Intercultural Awareness, Crime Awareness, Personal Care, Work Experience, and Career Preparation.

In 2025, young people earned certificates in 43 modules at Level 3/4 General Learning QQI.

Learning community

The school sets out to engage young people, many of whom have had negative experiences of formal education settings and may not have attended classes regularly before their detention in Oberstown. Academic and practical classes during the school day are often carried over into afterschool activities to suit the young people's targets, interests and personal goals, including their work for Gaisce – The President's Award.

Classes are small, typically no more than two or three young people at a time. The school fosters a sense of community and shared endeavour through initiatives and projects, including:

- Themed weeks during the school year, focusing on Positivity, Culture, Active Schools, and Maths.
- The Pieta House Amber Flag Initiative, which recognises the efforts of schools to create healthy and inclusive environments that support mental wellbeing and remove the stigma associated with mental health issues. Young people work with staff on an Amber Flag committee to ensure the school keeps its Amber Flag status.
- Oberstown Campus School is one of three Dublin schools chosen to take part in the Yellow Flag Programme 2024-2026. This is a practical programme that supports primary and secondary schools to become more inclusive of all cultures and ethnicities, celebrate diversity and challenge racism and discrimination.
- The Wellread Initiative, promoting literacy and reading.

Fostering creativity

In 2025, Oberstown Campus School partnered with external organisations to offer young people new outlets for developing creativity, confidence and community connection. The Activities team and unit staff supported teachers in facilitating these initiatives. Key projects and events included:

- Music in Mind – a series of eight percussion workshops run by performers and educators from the National Concert Hall.
- Music Generation – a national music education programme featuring a series of classes and live onsite performances by visiting musicians.
- Fighting Words – the school has a long-established connection with this creative writing initiative. Students attended workshops with visiting facilitators, learning and practising creative writing as a fun and powerful means of self-expression. Fighting Words produced a book of work by Oberstown young people.

Right: The Suzanne Savage Trio performed for students and staff in Oberstown Campus School – one of a series of concerts by visiting musicians under the Music Generation programme.

- Boys in the Making – a programme that uses creative methods to examine masculinity and its formation. Young people worked with an EPIC team, including an artist, to visualise their experiences in a comic book, scheduled for production early in 2026

Nurture and neurodiversity

The school continued to extend its efforts to accommodate neurodiverse students. Key developments included the arrival of JJ, a school therapy dog, who quickly became a key character around the corridors, classrooms and the nurture room. JJ was provided by My Canine Companion, an Irish national charity that trains and provides accredited service dogs to children and young adults with autism.

In November, Oberstown's approach to building a supportive and safe environment featured at the Nurturing Schools Ireland national conference in Portlaoise. Principal Suzanne Fitzpatrick along with Assistant Principal Colette Macken and art teacher Meabh De Búrca attended. Their presentation, "Embedding Nurture at Oberstown: A Journey of Growth, Connection and Belonging", was well received by the audience of 280 educators committed to creating environments where every student feels safe.

AFTERSCHOOL ACTIVITIES AND SKILLS TRAINING

The Oberstown Activities team provides a wide range of recreational, educational and skills training programmes. Young people attend afterschool sessions voluntarily and have their say in the range of activities offered – including sports, creative arts, personal development and relaxation classes and vocational skills courses.

During regular school terms, afterschool classes and activities start at 4pm and finish at 7.30pm each evening from Monday to Friday. On average, the Activities team delivers 16 classes in each of four time slots – a total of 64 classes each weekday evening. Young people also take part in programmes (see page 16) and pursue projects for Gaisce – The President's Award during activities hours.

2025 highlights

Summer school – July and August, including five weeks of optional school classes run each morning by schoolteachers.

Off-campus work experience and careers advice – 10 young people engaged in off-campus work experience programmes in the catering, building and fitness sectors. On campus, 75 young people engaged with Steps+, Oberstown's online careers development service developed in partnership with Careers Portal under a project financed by the Dormant Accounts Fund.

Fitness industry training – 22 young people completed a National Elite Professional Certificate EQF in Fitness Instruction (Level 3) and eight young people achieved the Level 4 Personal Trainer qualification. The courses are delivered on campus by long-standing partner Image Fitness.

Catering skills – Oberstown's partnership with Java Republic includes barista training and support for the onsite coffee van business. In 2025, ten young people trained as baristas and six trained on the coffee van. Young people also work with the Catering team – 30 young people completed HACCP training and nine completed catering training, including work experience in the staff canteen.

Safety training – The Health and Safety team provides young people with workplace certifications. Across the year, 22 young people completed a Safe Pass training course and 20 were trained in manual handling.

Barbering – one young person completed a 12-week barbering course.

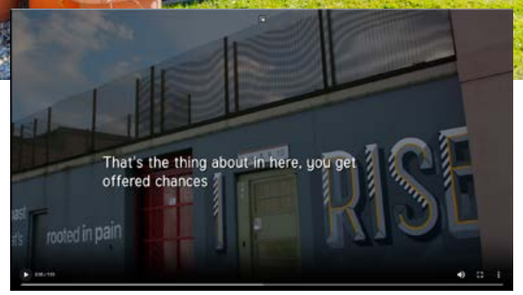
Horticulture – young people learn skills on the horticultural area of the campus. Oberstown's Horticultural Programme Coordinator trained 12 young people in 2025.

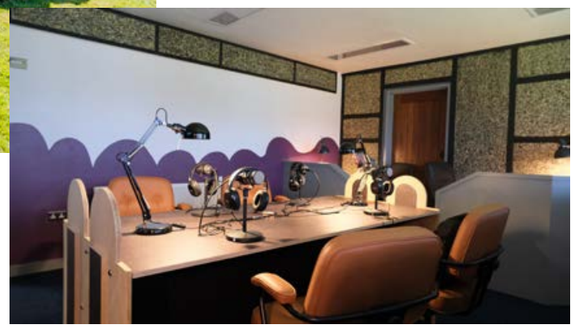
Sports activities – popular sports activities on campus include fitness work in the gym along with football, boxing and basketball. Oberstown's triathlon training programme, run by professional triathlete Ger Redmond, saw 16 young people complete the Oberstown Triathlon during the year. The event comprises a 50km stationary bike ride, 2km on the rowing machine and a 10km treadmill run.

Kenneth Egan, Irish Olympic boxing silver medallist, trained 20 young people during regular afterschool sessions at Oberstown in 2025.

Arts and creativity – young people engage in arts projects during school and in afterschool activities. In September, six young people created artworks for display on culture night at the Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre in Dublin. Artist Joe Caslin worked with eight young people to complete murals in the horticultural area.

Eight young people took part in acting workshops run by actor John Connors in a project to write raps and perform in music videos.





Clockwise from top left: Young people's work in the horticultural area included painting murals; one of the art pieces for Culture Night at Pavee Point; the Oberstown 'Hear I Am' project podcast room; a still photo from a video presenting young people's views expressed in podcasts.

Podcast project

Oberstown's 'Hear I Am' podcast project was supported by the Creative Youth Nurture Fund 2023-2025. It set out to generate creative and collaborative learning experiences and to enrich the lives of young people in detention, empowering them by giving them a voice.

A total of 44 young people participated in the 'Hear I Am' project, ranging in age from 15 years to 18 years. Young people were central to the design of the project, from building the podcast room to choosing themes, creating intro and incidental music, researching topics, preparing and conducting interviews with invited guests, staff members and their peers.

The project resulted in more than 20 podcast episodes, with young people discussing topics of interest to them and finding common ground with invited external guests and campus staff. The podcasts were used internally to prompt discussion in school classes and afterschool sessions.

External support for the podcast project came from documentary maker Kim Bartley of Frontline Films, who also produced a series of short videos based on young people's views and reflections on their life before Oberstown, their experiences on campus and their plans for the future. The videos were showcased at the 11th Irish Criminal Justice Agencies (ICJA) conference in October 2025 (see page 60).

The podcast project became one of the most popular activities for young people on campus and Oberstown is committed to continuing to offer this form of creative expression as an additional outlet for young people to have their voices heard.

Health & in-reach partnerships

Oberstown partners with in-reach and external service providers, agencies and stakeholders. This collaborative approach is central to delivering positive outcomes for young people through Oberstown's CEHOP® framework.

Key national service partners include Tusla, the Health Service Executive, the Irish Prison Service, the Education and Training Board, the Probation Service, An Garda Síochána, the Courts Service and the Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO). A range of agencies and community-based services provide targeted support for young people and their families.

Here is an overview of some of the key partnerships during 2025.

Victim liaison

Oberstown is a member of the Victims' Forum, established by the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration (DJHAM) for state, social and community groups to work together to meet the needs of victims. During 2025, Oberstown attended a meeting of the Victims' Forum and three Victim Liaison Officers' meetings in DJHAM. Victims of crime can voluntarily register for the Victim Liaison Service with Oberstown.

Traveller Justice Initiative

During 2025 Oberstown strengthened its links with the Traveller Justice Initiative through structured communication and shared learning. Regular meetings were held to exchange ideas, identify emerging needs and explore opportunities for joint initiatives. This partnership has supported and developed a more culturally sensitive approach to working with young people from the Traveller community, who represented 26% of the campus population in 2025. It focuses on information sharing, discussions on policy and practice, and signposting to appropriate supports and services.

Through this process, Oberstown has strengthened its relationship and commitment to inclusion, equality (equity) and culturally-informed practice to ensure that young people from the Traveller community are supported within the youth justice system.

Partnership with Hub na nÓg

Hub na nÓg is the national centre of excellence and coordination in children and young people's participation in decision making. It supports government departments, state agencies, public service and non-government organisations in providing opportunities for children and young people to participate in decision making, focusing on seldom-heard communities.

Oberstown is part of the network of practice which informs the work of Hub na nÓg, which offers training and development to involve children and young people in decision making in the policy, planning, practice, services and culture on campus.

In 2025, Oberstown staff attended training in participation, initiated the roll out of training to staff on campus, and attended the network of practice. Staff helped 11 young people to take part in the United Nations periodic review on rights and the experience of young people in Ireland.

Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration Bail Supervision Scheme

Oberstown collaborates with Extern, which runs the Bail Supervision Scheme (BSS) for DJHAM. The BSS offers the courts a community-based alternative to remanding a young person to detention by providing them with the possibility of granting bail with intensive supervision supports. The BSS uses intensive Multisystemic Therapy (MST), which focuses on supporting young people, reducing reoffending and ensuring compliance with bail conditions, while also supporting the needs of the family.

Oberstown works with Extern on identifying any young person on remand that may be eligible for the scheme through a referral. This collaborative approach focuses on achieving positive outcomes for young people and reducing time in detention – through supervision, support and access to services.

Working together, Oberstown and Extern aim to ensure that detention is only used as a last resort, while young people are supported to engage positively within their communities and work towards achievable long-term outcomes.

In 2025, there were 54 young people eligible for the service, of which 17 were already known to Extern. Oberstown referred 12 young people and one was referred from court. A further 24 did not engage for reasons including parents or the young person declining, and the release or detention of the young person before referral.

Le Chéile Mentoring

A dedicated Le Chéile Coordinator, based on campus, works with the Oberstown team to respond to parents of young people in detention and referrals for young people identified as suitable for mentoring.

Parent mentoring is a one-to-one, community-based family support service offering individual support to parents through their experience with the justice system. The Le Chéile Coordinator meets each parent and matches them with a suitable, trained volunteer who supports them through weekly meetings.

On campus, the Le Chéile Coordinator gets to know the young person and matches them to a suitable volunteer mentor in the community upon release. The mentoring service encourages pro-social activities, and can also help the young person towards successful reintegration with their family and community.

> **That's the thing about in here, you get offered chances that you don't get on the outside.**
>
> **Young person**

In 2025 a total of 24 young people and parents engaged with the service, with 13 new referrals received. Eight parents were engaged and 16 young people were supported prior to and post release.

In 2025 the Le Chéile Coordinator role facilitated an enhanced continuum of care, specifically responding to out-of-region referrals (outside Dublin). This involved the Coordinator, a familiar face, travelling and meeting the young person post-release in their community and facilitating an in-person meeting, linking them directly with the Le Chéile service in their local area. Offering both the young person and their parent their own individual mentor was a further innovation in 2025. This enables both parent and young person to grow individually, while being supported as they transition back into their relationship together post-release.

During 2025, Le Chéile recruited 14 new volunteer mentors to join its dedicated team based in Dublin.

The Diamond Project

The Diamond Project, based in Dublin's north inner city and funded by the Probation Service, supports young people to divert young people from further harm and prevent reoffending. The Diamond Team consists of Senior Project Workers and a Systemic Family Therapist to work therapeutically and restoratively with the young person and their families.

Diamond established a link programme with Oberstown in April 2025. During the young person's time in Oberstown and following their release, the Diamond team delivers targeted interventions to repair harm and reduce reoffending. Diamond also supports the young person's family and community organisations to strengthen relationships and build a personalised support plan to ensure that, when they return to the community, robust protective factors are already in place.

In 2025, Diamond worked with six young people in Oberstown. Four of these were referred by Oberstown and two were already referred to the Diamond Project prior to detention. Two young people were released and supported in their transition to the community. One is currently accessing education and has not re-entered the justice system. Diamond is working with three of the four remaining in Oberstown to coordinate educational and employment options in preparation for their release. The other is receiving support with their transition into the adult prison system. All six young people and their families have accessed Diamond's family therapy supports.

EPIC

EPIC – Empowering People in Care provides external advocacy and a programme of youth participation for young people in Oberstown.

In 2025, a reorientation of the EPIC advocacy service from appointment-based to less formal relationship building during afterschool activities resulted in increased engagement.

The EPIC Youth Engagement Team worked with the Oberstown Campus School on "Boys in the Making," a programme that learns from the lived experiences and insights of boys and young men, using creative methods to examine masculinity and its formation. Young people worked with an EPIC team including an artist to visualise their experiences in a comic book, scheduled for production early in 2026.

Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO)

The OCO attends the campus monthly, engaging with young people by appointment and informally in afterschool activities.

Way 2 Work

Way 2 Work engages with young people on campus, providing individual mentor-mentee services and facilitating training and employment programmes.

MEDICAL PARTNERSHIPS

Meeting a wide range of health and therapeutic needs is a key element in Oberstown's CEHOP® framework. The dedicated Health & Wellbeing team runs the campus medical suite, offering clinical nursing services along with visiting onsite GP, dental, podiatry, physiotherapy, and optician services.

FCAMHS

The HSE's National Forensic Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (FCAMHS) provides psychiatric care, with on-campus clinic appointments every week.

ACTS

Tusla's ACTS (Assessment, Consultation and Therapy Service) has a dedicated team of six professionals on campus providing specialist multidisciplinary therapeutic support to young people to address behaviours associated with complex clinical needs.

The ACTS Oberstown team members are a Clinical Team Manager, a Senior Psychologist, Senior Speech and Language Therapist, a Senior Social Worker and two Social Care Leaders. They use the AMBIT framework (Adaptive Mentalization Based Integrative Treatment) – a whole-team approach designed for working with clients presenting with multiple and complex problems, and developed for young people who are typically underserved by mainstream community services.

The ACTS Oberstown team's main purpose is to:

1. Perform multidisciplinary team (MDT) assessment for children coming into detention.
2. Provide an advisory service to the courts.
3. Conduct interventions to help children, families and networks of support to reduce the risk of children reoffending and returning to detention.
4. Offer signposting to community supports and services.
5. Support Oberstown to care for and manage children.

Young people are referred to ACTS by the Oberstown Health & Wellbeing team, unit staff or FCAMHS. Every referral is allocated for an ACTS initial assessment of clinical need and is subject to a multidisciplinary clinical review.

Following initial assessment, each young person is allocated a clinician or clinicians based on their clinical needs and an ITP (individual therapy plan) is developed in consultation with the young person, and shared with the young person and those working with the young person. The ITP is reviewed at multidisciplinary team meetings.

Supporting young people as they transition back to the community is a key part of the service. This work focuses on mobilising supports and promoting engagement, and typically lasts up to a maximum of six weeks following discharge.

Oberstown Medical Suite activity 2025

624
GP clinic appointments

2,484
Nurse-led clinic appointments

148
FCAMHS clinic appointments

292
Dental clinic appointments

38
Optician clinic appointments

209
Physiotherapy clinic appointments

2
Podiatrist clinic appointments

37
Routine hospital appointments

10
Hospital A&E visits

46
Staff reviews

Hope rising

The role of the chaplain at Oberstown

Chaplain John Herron supports not only the young people's spiritual needs, but he also famously arrives at Oberstown laden with flour, sugar and sprinkles. John describes how cupcakes can open the door to connection — and what it means to offer hope during a time when hope may be hard to find.

How would you describe the role of the chaplain?

One of the best descriptions I ever heard of a chaplain was: "A friend to all." I love that definition, and I would seek to be that.

How do you connect with the young people?

I think there are two secret sauces to chaplaincy – one is hope, and the other is tenderness.

Hope is about being a holder of hope, always trying to open the window and let the hope in. There's this great line in The Shawshank Redemption: "Hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things, and no good thing ever dies." It's always about trying to rub the hope into the hopelessness, into the despair, to say: "What you think is a full stop might actually only be a comma. There's more to come. There's more to be. There's more to see. There's more to live."

And then tenderness. A lot of the young people who come in here are carrying trauma; they've come from a lot of dysfunction and neglect. Sometimes when you meet them initially, their walls are up very high. And I think the only thing that has the power to scale that wall is tenderness. Maybe they're not used to it, especially from a big grown man like me. I look like I might be a bit scary. But once I speak, I would hope they'd encounter tenderness.

How have you developed the chaplaincy service?

When I arrived on the campus [in February 2022], I wasn't exactly sure where to begin. But I knew I wanted to build and offer a very hands-on service to the young people. And the one thing I knew young people would engage with was baking. I had just done all the baking at a social café that I ran for three years prior to working at Oberstown. So, for the first six months here I just baked – all the time. And the young people wanted to bake with me, which may sound surprising to some. You don't equate baking with big tough lads from tough neighbourhoods. But I was always laughing watching these big tough lads, fussing about what colour the frosting would be on their lemon cupcake!

"One of the best descriptions I ever heard of a chaplain was: 'A friend to all.' I love that definition, and I would seek to be that."

It's amazing what comes up when you're baking together, side by side, chatting. What that did was build the connection and the relationship. And then I had access at other moments because they would invite me into their story. They would ask me to pray for them when they were going to court or when they had a bereavement.

And just out of that, I started dropping into the school, having a wee devotional lesson prepared or a game, and building relationships that way. That turned into Sunday Chapel. Then a breakfast club. Then the Forgiveness Project on Tuesday nights. Now, I have a full week of groups, each with different boys, and more boys wanting to come. It started with slowly building up the relationship, and then the opportunities came.

How do you measure the impact of what you do?

That's a hard thing to gauge sometimes. Does it come through the numbers that attend? Through really good conversations? Through seeing young people start to engage in their faith? Through behaviour change? I guess where I resolve myself is in seeing my role with young people as sowing seeds. And everyone knows, the day you sow the seeds is not the day you eat the fruit. Your job is just to sow the seed and pray that in time the harvest will come.

Someone said once: "Young people may forget what you tell them, but they'll never forget how you made them feel." I think there's a real truth in that. You hope that you can create an impression — that at a later stage in their life they'll think of faith and say: "Maybe I could find some help there, some comfort there. Because I met this person once who made me feel seen, who gave me hope in a time where hope was very hard to find."

2025 HIGHLIGHTS

The Forgiveness Project
Groups of young people explore the power and restoration of forgiveness by sharing stories from scripture and everyday life.

Alpha Youth
A 'youth club' space to connect, have fun and ask the 'bigger questions' about life and faith.

Sunday Chapel
Young people pray, reflect and connect spiritually. Once a month, a guest speaker shared their inspirational life story.

Easter / Autumn Retreats
Five-day retreats, held during the Easter and mid-term autumn school breaks, with speakers and activities to build connections with God and one another.

The Big Faith Weekend
In August, a weekend of speakers, rappers, and a youth band.

The Breakfast Club
Young people make and serve breakfast for their schoolmates.

My Prayer Book
Prayers written by the young people with scripture and poems to provide support and comfort during difficult times.

Tiglin
Tiglin staff and residents visited campus four times in 2025. They played soccer, held a table quiz and exchanged stories.

Special visits
Both Katie Taylor and her mother Bridget visited campus during 2025. Almost all the young people got an opportunity to meet them and hear their stories.

Suicide Awareness Day
A special event to mark the day. Young people wrote the names of those affected by suicide on yellow biodegradable balloons and released them together.

Governance structure

Oberstown operates under the auspices of the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE). The Director is accountable to the Board of Management for all aspects of campus operations and for providing the Board with all relevant information to ensure effective oversight.

MINISTER FOR CDE

- Children Detention Schools Unit provides administrative oversight on behalf of the Minister

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

- Appointed by the Minister under the Children Act 2001
- Responsible for oversight of the Strategy and overall management of Oberstown
- Standing Committees: Audit and Risk Committee; Governance & Strategy Committee; People & Culture Committee; Performance Committee; Sustainability Committee; Young People Committee

DIRECTOR SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

- Director has executive responsibility for day-to-day management of the campus, with support from the Senior Management Team, which includes Deputy Directors with responsibility for care, and senior managers responsible for people, risk and finance

OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT

- Site and Residential Unit Managers with responsibility for care staff and operations
- Young people's programmes/services and education managers
- Campus support service managers

OBERSTOWN GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Oberstown is governed by a Board of Management appointed by the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality under the Children Act 2001 (sections 164 to 167). The Board complies with good governance in line with legislation and the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016). Part 10 of the Children Act 2001 outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Minister, the Board of Management and the Oberstown Director. The legislation takes precedence in the case of any conflict between the Code of Practice and the legislation.

The Board carries out its functions on behalf of the Minister. Its key responsibility is to provide oversight and strategic direction to Oberstown on behalf of the Minister. The Board is also responsible for supporting the Director to deliver the strategic plan and is accountable to the Minister in line with the Children Act 2001 and associated legislation and policy.

Board membership

The Board of Management of Oberstown has 12 members plus a Chair, and includes representatives of the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE), the Department of Education, Tusla, two representatives from the local community and two independent members of staff, with five members identified via the Public Appointments Service (PAS) process. Members are appointed for a term, renewable, of up to four years. Profiles of the Board members are provided on pages 34-35.

Board meetings

Under the Children Act 2001, the Board must hold as many meetings as necessary for the performance of its functions and is entitled to determine its own procedure. There were 10 regular Board meetings in 2025. The Board Secretary circulates a meeting update to staff on behalf of the Chair and publishes it on the Oberstown website following each Board meeting.

Dates of the Board of Management meetings, and details of attendance, are set out in Appendix 2.

> **If you ask for something to happen, the change will happen.**
>
> **Young person**

OBERSTOWN BOARD OF MANAGEMENT 2025

Board members at 31 December 2025

Koulla Yiasouma

Chair

Appointment: *Ministerial (PAS process)*

Appointment date: *1 June 2023*

Term: *4 years*

Committee membership: *Audit and Risk, Governance & Strategy, People & Culture (Chair), Performance (Chair), Young People*

Koulla joined the Oberstown Board following an eight-year term as the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People. She is a qualified social worker and former Director (Chief Executive) of Include Youth, a Northern Ireland policy and advocacy NGO focused on supporting young people who were care experienced and/or had been involved in the criminal justice system, to improve their employability through work experience, training and education. She is an Honorary Professor of Practice at Queen's University Belfast and works closely with the Centre for Children's Rights in the School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work. In 2025, she was appointed Chair of the Young Ireland Advisory Council by the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality.

Brian Arnold

Appointment: *Ministerial (Community representative)*

Appointment date: *1 July 2024 (reappointment)*

Term: *3 years*

Committee membership: *Performance, Sustainability (Chair)*

Brian Arnold is a local community representative, resident in the vicinity of Oberstown. He is a management consultant with over 30 years' experience in the public and private sectors. He is Chairperson and a director of Lusk Community Council.

David Byrne

Appointment: *Ministerial (DCDE nominee)*

Appointment date: *15 September 2025*

Term: *4 years*

Committee membership: *Governance & Strategy*

David Byrne is a Principal Officer in the Children Detention Schools Unit, Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE).

Bernadette Costello

Appointment: *Ministerial (PAS process)*

Appointment date: *1 July 2023 (reappointment)*

Term: *3 years*

Committee membership: *Audit and Risk (Chair), Performance*

Bernadette Costello is a Chartered Director and Chartered Accountant. She is the former Director of Internal Audit & Risk at University of Galway and has extensive experience in financial and management accounting, corporate governance and related areas. She is currently a director of a number of boards in the public and charitable sectors.

Elizabeth Davey

Appointment: *Ministerial (PAS process)*

Appointment date: *18 July 2022*

Term: *4 years*

Committee membership: *Audit and Risk, Young People*

Elizabeth Davey was called to the Bar in 2006. She is a practising barrister specialising in criminal, administrative, mental health and investigative law. She has a Masters in Criminology and a particular interest in youth justice.

Jennifer Gargan

Appointment: *Ministerial (PAS process)*

Appointment date: *1 July 2023 (reappointment)*

Term: *3 years*

Committee membership: *Audit and Risk, People & Culture, Performance, Young People (Chair)*

Jennifer Gargan is a qualified social worker who has worked in the areas of community development, child protection and family support. As CEO of EPIC, Jennifer was an active advocate for the rights of young people with care experience in order to bring about changes in legislation, policy and practice.

Liz O'Neill

Appointment: *Ministerial (Department of Education nominee)*

Appointment date: *1 July 2023 (reappointment)*

Term: *3 years*

Committee membership: *Young People*

Liz O'Neill is the Department of Education representative on the Board and a school inspector with 15 years' experience of carrying out evaluations in a range of learning settings, including post-primary schools, special schools, special care units, and Oberstown Campus School. Her work has involved supporting the Office of the Inspector of Prisons in conducting evaluations of education, work and training in prison settings.

William O'Rourke

Appointment: *Ministerial (Tusla nominee)*

Appointment date: *1 June 2023 (reappointment)*

Term: *4 years*

Committee membership: *People & Culture*

William O'Rourke was appointed by the Minister on foot of the requirements of section 167 of the Children Act 2001. He is the Tusla representative on the Board.

Martin Quigley

Appointment: *Ministerial (PAS process)*

Appointment date: *18 July 2022*

Term: *4 years*

Committee membership: *Governance & Strategy*

Martin Quigley is the Director of Data & Analytics with Pobal, where he has responsibility for reporting, analytics and using data to support evidence-based social inclusion programme delivery and policy making. Martin is a qualified social care worker, having previously spent several years working with young people experiencing homelessness in Dublin city.

Fergal Reynolds

Appointment: *Ministerial*

Appointment date: *1 July 2025 (reappointment)*

Term: *2 years*

Committee membership: *Sustainability*

Fergal Reynolds is a Residential Social Care Worker on the Oberstown Campus. He is an elected staff nominee, appointed by the Minister on foot of the requirements of section 167 of the Children Act 2001.

Emma Shanahan

Appointment: *Ministerial*

Appointment date: *1 July 2025 (reappointment)*

Term: *2 years*

Committee membership: *Governance & Strategy, People & Culture*

Emma Shanahan is a Site Manager on the Oberstown Campus. She is an elected staff nominee, appointed by the Minister on foot of the requirements of section 167 of the Children Act 2001.

Dymphna Sherry

Appointment: *Ministerial (Community representative)*

Appointment date: *18 July 2025 (reappointment)*

Term: *3 years*

Committee membership: *People & Culture, Sustainability, Young People*

Dymphna Sherry is a local community representative, resident in the vicinity of the Oberstown Campus.

Other Board members in 2025

John McDaid
Term ended 30 June 2025

Úna Ní Dhubhghaill
Term ended 15 September 2025

GENDER BALANCE

- As at 31 December 2025, the Board had six (55 %) female and five (45 %) male members, with one position vacant.
- The Chair is female.
- The Board therefore meets the Government target of a minimum of 40 % representation of each gender in the membership of State Boards.

BOARD COMMITTEES

Under the Children Act 2001, the Board must hold as many meetings as necessary for the performance of its functions and is entitled to determine its own procedure. There were 10 regular Board meetings in 2025. The Board Secretary circulates a meeting update to staff on behalf of the Chair and publishes it on the Oberstown website following each Board meeting.

Dates of the Board of Management and committee meetings, and details of attendance, are set out in Appendix 2.

Board committees

The Board had six standing committees at 31 December 2025 – Audit and Risk, Governance & Strategy, People & Culture, Performance, Sustainability, and Young People.

See below for overview reports on committee activities (no summary for the Performance Committee as it deals with internal personnel issues).

The Committees all operate in line with clearly defined Terms of Reference, approved by the Board and set out in the Oberstown Governance Handbook.

Audit and Risk Committee

The purpose of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) is to assist the Board of Management in its assessment of the effectiveness of the systems established by the management of Oberstown Children Detention Campus, including reviewing the comprehensiveness and reliability of internal controls and assurances on risk management, the control environment and the accuracy and completeness of the financial statements. The Terms of Reference of the Committee were approved by the Board on 6 November 2025.

The ARC met six times in 2025. It comprises four non-executive directors including a member with accounting qualifications and significant corporate governance experience. ARC had five members during 2025: Bernadette Costello (Chair), Koulla Yiasouma, John McDaid (term ended in September 2025), Jennifer Gargan and Elizabeth Davey.

Governance & Strategy Committee

The Governance & Strategy Committee's main objective is to assure the Board of the proper governance of Oberstown's activities, and to support the development of the strategic planning and implementation process. The Committee also oversees the work of Oberstown's Research Advisory Group.

The Committee had six members during 2025: John McDaid (Chair) until June 2025 when his term as a Board member ended, Martin Quigley (Chair from June to December), Koulla Yiasouma, Emma Shanahan, David Byrne and Úna Ní Dubhghaill (until September when her term ended as a Board member).

The Committee met four times in 2025. Its work included:

- Developed and completed the Committee's workplan for 2025, providing the Board with regular updates.
- Monitored progress against the Oberstown Business Plan 2025 and worked with the Senior Management Team to draft a Business Plan for 2026.
- Oversaw completion of an internal Board self-evaluation.
- Updated Board members on training opportunities.
- Oversight of Departmental Agreements – reviewed the Performance Delivery Agreement and Oversight Agreement.
- Completed a comprehensive review of the Oberstown Governance Handbook.
- Completed the Code of Practice Checklist. Gaps identified were added to the Committee workplan along with actions to address these issues.
- Organised two Board away days. In April 2025, the meeting focused on engagement with young people and a review of the Children's Rights Policy Framework. In September 2025, the meeting discussed engagement with staff, including a focus groups session with participants from a wide range of departments on campus. The Board also reviewed the Strategy 2022 - 2026.
- Reviewed the findings of a review of the Children's Rights Policy Framework, completed in 2025.
- Signed off on the Research Strategy developed by the Research Advisory Group, with the final version approved by the Board in June 2025.
- Monitored the HIQA Compliance Plan.
- Agreed tender specifications for development of the new Oberstown strategy.

People & Culture Committee

The People & Culture Committee supports the Board in developing and implementing the Oberstown people and culture strategy.

The Committee had five members during 2025: Koulla Yiasouma (Chair), Jennifer Gargan, William O'Rourke, Dymphna Sherry and Emma Shanahan.

The People & Culture Committee met four times in 2025. Its work included:

- Oversaw implementation of recommendations from the Culture Review and communications about the report.
- Reviewed points raised at the Board staff engagement session held in September and committed to engaging with staff annually.
- Guided the process for developing a performance management system, with the project scheduled for 2026.
- Provided oversight on behalf of the Board of the quarterly HR returns provided to DCDE.
- Provided oversight of the CORU Registration Project for RSCWs.
- Monitored and interrogated progress of assigned action items within Business Plan 2025 and the HIQA Compliance Plan.
- Provided oversight of the implementation of the 2025 strategic priorities for Goal 2 of Strategy 2022-2026.
- Monitored and reported on the resolution of issues concerning annual leave (work performed with the Audit and Risk Committee).
- Developed and completed the Committee workplan for 2025.
- Interrogated HR metrics around staffing levels, recruitment, staff absences, assault & injury leave, annual leave levels and training.

Sustainability Committee

The Sustainability Committee assesses, guides, reports on and makes recommendations to the Board for approval on the area of development and implementation of Oberstown's Sustainability Strategy. Its Terms of Reference were reviewed and updated in September 2025.

The Committee had three members during 2025: Brian Arnold (Chair), Dymphna Sherry and Fergal Reynolds.

BOARD ACTIONS 2025

- Monitored the implementation of the Oberstown Strategy 2022-2026 and approved the Annual Business Plan 2025, updated to include the HIQA Compliance Plan, supporting the Director to deliver in key strategic areas.
- Approved the Financial Statements and Statement of Internal Control for 2024.
- Interrogated data on the use of restrictive practices submitted for each Board meeting, setting clear expectations for their reduced use in line with Oberstown policy.
- Approved the final report of a Culture Review conducted by Forvis Mazars. Approval followed detailed consideration by the Audit and Risk, People & Culture, and Performance committees. Agreed an implementation plan with Senior Management and staff.
- Held a Board-staff engagement session on campus.
- Reviewed the Risk Register with particular focus on capacity & occupancy, and staffing levels.
- Approved, and sent to DCDE for consideration, an updated version of the Children's Rights Policy Framework (CRPF) following a project led by the CRPF Review Group and consultation with external stakeholders.
- Approved the Oberstown Code of Practice Compliance Checklist and submitted the checklist to DCDE.

Oberstown has made me realise there's a different way to life. But you have to put the work in, you have to want it.

Young person

The Sustainability Committee met four times in 2025. Its work included:

- Provided oversight of the Environmental Programme 2024-2026, which provides guidance to the organisation and presents an integrated overview of Oberstown's sustainability pathway.
- Reviewed the updated Climate Action Roadmap and recommended its approval to the Board.
- Monitored the Business Plan 2024 with specific focus on action items assigned to the Committee and linked to Goal 5 of the Oberstown Strategy 2022-2026.
- Reviewed and interrogated energy reporting data and practices, reporting regularly to the Board.
- Reviewed the Oberstown Energy Policy, developed to meet the requirements of ISO 50001, and recommended its approval to the Board.
- Provided oversight of the process to achieve ISO 50001 certification by Q4 2025 through regular updates from the Environmental Sustainability Officer.
- Reviewed the Environmental Policy and recommended its approval to the Board.
- Reviewed the Safety Statement and recommended its approval to the Board.
- Provided oversight of environmental initiatives in Oberstown including food waste management and sustainable procurement.
- Implemented a recommendation from the Culture Review concerning a "green masterplan" that facilitates a sustainable and secure campus.

Young People Committee

The Young People Committee ensures that the views of young people are heard and taken into account by the Board, and reviews the Oberstown advocacy and participation process. Its Terms of Reference were reviewed and approved in June 2025.

The Committee had five members during 2025: Jennifer Gargan (Chair), Koulla Yiasouma, Liz O'Neill, Elizabeth Davey and Dymphna Sherry.

The Committee met five times in 2025. Its work included:

- Developed a 2025 workplan with priorities including:
- Implementation of the review of participation.
- Restrictive Practice: review the policy and procedure and how it is used in practice.
- Review of Mental Health Services.
- Review of ratings system for young people.
- Oversight of Business Plan 2025.
- Monitor implementation of the HIQA Compliance Plan.
- Met with young people and discussed matters of concern to them, including: activities, programmes and courses; education and training; food; the rating system; staffing levels; relationships with staff; behaviour management; positive experiences in Oberstown.
- Followed up the issues raised by young people with the Director and provided feedback to the young people.
- Reviewed the final draft of the revised Children's Rights Policy Framework and recommended it to the Board for submission to DCDE.

Board and committee meetings January - December 2025

See Appendix 2 for full details of attendance.

10
Board meetings

22
Committee meetings

6 Audit and Risk

4 Governance & Strategy

4 People & Culture

3 Sustainability

5 Young People

HEALTH INFORMATION AND QUALITY AUTHORITY INSPECTION 2025

The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) inspects Oberstown annually. The 2025 announced inspection took place on 10–12 November 2025.

The inspection found that "overall the provider [Oberstown] was delivering a good quality, child-centred and safe service to young people" and noted the challenges associated with persistently high occupancy levels and the numbers of young people whose complex needs require increased levels of staffing and supports.

Service user feedback

HIQA reported positive sentiments about the quality of care provided at Oberstown. Inspectors highlighted the support and encouragement provided on campus, with one young person saying "I feel safe here" and another describing staff as "friendly, kind and sound".

Young people were found to engage freely with and contribute to their placement planning meetings – a key feature of Oberstown's individualised and participative approach. One young person noted that "it's nice to hear the positive things they (staff) say about you" in those settings.

Feedback from parents and external professionals reflected overall satisfaction with their experience of the service provided at Oberstown. Inspectors were told "They did good work with my son" and "I am grateful for how well he is being cared for." Staff were described as "amazing" and "warm and welcoming".

Year-on-year progress

HIQA found that progress had been made in several key areas since its June 2024 inspection:

1. Efforts to reduce restrictive practices have been effective, with the report noting a downward trend in the use of single separation (down 33%) and physical restraints (down 13%). Oberstown's single separation policy was updated to include mechanisms for increased managerial oversight, and a procedure for physical restraints was implemented. Plans are progressing to introduce safety pods and soft handcuff training, aimed at reducing the impact of restrictive practices on young people.
2. Practice supervision delivered by the Oberstown Organisational Psychologist has been implemented consistently and is now operating well, with attendance at supervision up to 81% in 2025 from 66% in 2024.
3. HIQA noted progress towards establishing a formal performance management system, including holding a management workshop and developing a template for recording one-to-one meetings.
4. An action plan based on Oberstown's participation strategy was developed, with a steering group established to oversee its implementation. In 2025, Oberstown ran a recruitment campaign for the new post of participation officer to support young people. The campaign did not fill the post, which will be readvertised in 2026. HIQA noted the installation of a new system to allow young people to watch individual films in their rooms, addressing a concern raised during the 2024 inspection, as evidence of participation processes leading to action.
5. Improvements were made in staff maintaining up-to-date mandatory training, including an increase in Children First training completion rates to 81% in 2025, up from 69% in 2024. HIQA noted a completion rate of 89% for Children First training for mandated persons.
6. HIQA reported that good progress was made on many actions outlined in the 2022-2026 strategic plan, including a comprehensive review of the Oberstown Children's Rights Policy Framework, which was on track for finalisation in 2025.

2025 inspection process

Four HIQA inspectors conducted an announced onsite inspection over three days, from 10 – 12 November 2025. The inspectors:

- Reviewed all available information about the service, including previous inspection findings and information received since the last inspection.
- Engaged with young people to understand their experiences, meeting 29 of the 41 in residence at the time of the inspection. These meetings took place during young people's lunch breaks, after school and during evening activities.
- Interacted with staff and management to learn about how care and support services were planned, delivered, and monitored.
- Observed daily practices and interactions between young people and staff to assess whether they aligned with the feedback received.
- Reviewed records to ensure appropriate documentation was maintained and reflected the practices and feedback provided.
- Sent surveys to all young people prior to the inspection, focusing on their experiences with restrictive practices, participation, consultation, and their rights. Thirty-seven young people completed the surveys.
- Attended placement planning meetings (PPMs), young people's meetings, and observed evening activities.
- Spoke with eight parents and three social workers to gather their views on the service.
- Conducted focus groups with care staff and managers to discuss supervision and other aspects of the service.
- Examined oversight systems, including records of complaints, restrictive practices, and management meetings.
- Assessed compliance with specific rules under two dimensions: "Capacity and Capability of the Service" and "Quality and Safety of the Service." Findings were grouped and reported under these dimensions.

2025 inspection findings

HIQA inspects Oberstown against bespoke standards (12 rules) set out in the Oberstown Children's Rights Policy Framework, which aims to ensure the service provides young people with the best care possible and respects their rights in a safe and secure environment. The 2025 inspection focused on five of the 12 rules, finding the service to be compliant or substantially compliant in the rules covering young people's participation, positive behaviour, and management authority to suspend campus rules. Oberstown was not compliant in two of the rules: Rule 9 Restrictive practices and Rule 10 Staffing, management and governance.

All findings have been comprehensively examined and a compliance action plan is in place to address areas identified for improvement within agreed timeframes.

Rule 7 – Participation

Strengths

- Young people actively participate in decision making at individual, unit, and campus levels.
- Oberstown is "continually striving to improve participation for young people". The campus has an effective advocacy system with internal and external advocacy officers.
- Young people are provided with information about their rights, rules, and services upon arrival.
- Young people's complaints are managed and investigated in a timely manner.

Improvement focus

Record-keeping to ensure all aspects of the complaints process, including any follow-up required with young people who are dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint.

Inspection finding: *compliant.*

Rule 8 – Positive behaviour

Strengths

- Individualised Behaviour Support Plans (BSPs) tailored to young people's needs.
- Multi-disciplinary team (MDT) approach to care and therapeutic support.
- Incentives including ratings systems, permitted absences, and work opportunities promote positive behaviour.

Improvement focus

- BSPs were not always updated in a timely manner after incidents.
- Rating levels were not consistently recorded in the Oberstown case management system (OBCMS).

Inspection finding: *substantially compliant.*

Rule 9 – Restrictive Practices

Strengths

- Reduction in the use of single separation and physical restraints – down to 458 single separations in January-September 2025 compared to 688 incidents in 2024, a reduction of 33%.
- Staff demonstrated understanding of restrictive practices as a last resort and for the shortest duration possible.
- Good oversight systems for monitoring restrictive practices were in place and were effective.

Improvement focus

- Single separation was used on 10 occasions [of 458] due to staffing shortages, breaching national policy.
- Inconsistencies and inaccuracies in the recording of debriefings and learning points following restrictive practices.
- Some instances (three) where records suggest that single separations may have continued into the next day despite "the young person's behaviour no longer appearing to pose a risk".
- Improvements needed in tracking implementation of recommendations from incident reviews.

Inspection finding: *not compliant.*

Rule 10 – Staffing, Management, and Governance

Strengths

- Clear management and governance structure with oversight by the Board of Management.
- Progress in workforce planning, recruitment, and supervision.
- Strategic plan (2022–2026) implementation ongoing, with "good progress on many of the actions".

Improvement focus

- Persistent staffing shortages required restrictive practices to be used on 10 dates over the 12 months prior to the inspection.
- No formal strategic workforce plan despite staffing being a high-risk issue.
- Inconsistent quality of record-keeping.
- Delays in mandatory training due to staffing shortages.

Inspection finding: *not compliant.*

Rule 12 – Authority to Suspend Rules

Strengths

- Clear procedures in place for suspending rules during emergencies.
- No suspension of rules occurred in the last 12 months.

Improvement focus

- The inspectors did not identify any areas for improvement under this rule.

Inspection finding: *compliant.*

OTHER STATUTORY BODIES WITH POWERS OF INSPECTION OR INVESTIGATION

The Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO) – promotes the rights and welfare of children and young people up to 18 years old living in Ireland. The OCO deals with complaints made by or on behalf of children, including those in Oberstown, in relation to the actions of public bodies under section 8 of the Ombudsman for Children Act 2002, as amended. During 2025, young people met informally with OCO representatives during outreach visits to the campus.

The Inspectorate of the Department of Education – carries out inspections of the Oberstown Campus School under sections 7 and 13 of the Education Act 1998.

Oberstown is also subject to regulation by a range of other statutory bodies, including:

- Workplace Relations Commission – compliance with employment legislation.
- Health Service Executive – inspection of environment (catering areas and drinking water) by Environmental Health Officers; and the Health and Safety Authority regarding compliance with the Health and Safety Act 2005.
- Fingal County Council – inspects the integrated constructed wetlands on campus.

Business and compliance overview 2025

Oberstown operates in line with relevant legislation, the Children Act 2001 and the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016).

Conflicts of interest

There were no declared conflicts of interest – personal, professional or financial – concerning any decisions of the Board during 2025. The Board maintains a Register of Interests that is reviewed by the Governance Committee annually. No conflicts were declared in 2025.

Protected disclosures

In accordance with Section 22 of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 , Oberstown has established procedures for the making of protected disclosures and for dealing with such disclosures From 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025, two protected disclosures were received.

Both disclosures were assessed in accordance with Oberstown's Protected Disclosures Policy and the requirements of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014. Investigations were initiated into both disclosures and remained ongoing at the reporting date of this report.

Parliamentary questions

Oberstown works with DCDE to provide accurate and up-to-date information to public representatives and officials. In 2025, Oberstown contributed to the answers to 73 parliamentary questions – up from 24 in 2024.

Freedom of information (FOI) requests

Oberstown publishes details of FOI requests received, in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's Code of Practice for Freedom of Information for Public Bodies.

In 2025, Oberstown received four requests under the Freedom of Information Act, 2014. All four were granted or part-granted.

Data protection

Across 2025, we reviewed and strengthened our data protection policies and procedures to ensure compliance with our legal obligations and best practice standards. Regular staff training, policy updates and audits underlined our commitment to a culture of data protection awareness and compliance. The DPO provided guidance on Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs) for new or high-risk processing activities.

The Oberstown DPO:

- Assists in monitoring internal compliance
- Informs and advises on data protection obligations
- Advises on DPIAs
- Acts as a contact point between data subjects and Oberstown.

There is a dedicated email address (DPO@oberstown.com) for data protection queries and reporting. Data Protection has a dedicated space on the Oberstown Workvivo internal communications platform. In 2025, Oberstown received and responded to eight Data Subject Access Requests (DSAR). There were four non-reportable breaches and three reportable breaches in 2025.

Financial allocation

The budget of Oberstown Children Detention Campus is allocated by DCDE. In 2025, the campus received a core allocation of €28.528m as follows:

Allocation item	Amount €m
Pay	18.410
Pensions	3.255
Non-pay	6.863

The campus also incurred capital expenditure of €2.250m in 2025 funded by the Department.

Oberstown's payroll function is provided by the National Shared Services Office (NSSO) through DCDE. The accounting officer of the NSSO is responsible for

controls within shared services.

The functions underpinning these responsibilities include authorising and monitoring payments for goods and services, tendering processes and compilation of monthly returns to the Department.

Internal financial control

The Board has overall responsibility for the internal financial control of Oberstown. It delegates responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of risk management and the internal control environment to the Board's Audit and Risk Committee.

Budget management

The Director and the Senior Management Team prepare an annual budget based on the operational and developmental needs of Oberstown. The annual budget is recommended for approval to the Board, via the Audit and Risk Committee. Day-to-day responsibility for managing expenditure within budget limits is assigned to the Director. Expenditure is monitored closely, with monthly reports furnished to DCDE, and quarterly to the Audit and Risk Committee.

Internal audit function

Internal audit is an independent appraisal function designed to give assurance to the Board, the Audit and Risk Committee, the Director and all levels of management on the adequacy and effectiveness of Oberstown's systems of governance, risk and internal controls.

The Internal Audit function is outsourced. Oberstown procures Internal Audit Services through the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) using its established framework for accountancy and auditing services. It operates in accordance with an audit charter approved by the Board and an annual audit plan approved by the Audit and Risk Committee and the Board. In carrying out audits, the contractor complies with the Institute of Internal Audit Standards, as adapted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform for use in government departments.

The internal auditors reviewed internal controls in 2025; all recommendations were accepted.

Procurement

Oberstown operates under the Public Procurement Guidelines, which provide the direction for all procurement policy activity, ensuring that the campus complies with and observes the objectives and key principles of competition, equality of treatment and transparency that underpin national and EU rules.

Oberstown avails of centralised managed contracts established by the OGP and continues to engage the OGP for advice on current and future procurement requirements. In 2025, a number of contracts were successfully procured in conjunction with OGP in line with the Oberstown procurement plan.

Financial statements for the year 1 January to 31 December 2025 and Oberstown statement on internal controls

The Board of Management keeps accounts in line with section 173 of the Children Act 2001.

Throughout 2025, Oberstown Children Detention Campus continued to manage its financial resources in line with governance requirements. Budgeting and ongoing forecasting enabled secure management of actual expenditure against planned and available resources.

The Financial Statements of Oberstown Children Detention Campus for the year 1 January to 31 December 2025, and its Statement on Internal Controls for the same period, have been completed and will be published as appendices to the Annual Report 2025 on the Oberstown website (www.oberstown.com) following completion of the audit by the Office of the Comptroller & Auditor General (C&AG).

Financial statements for the year 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024 are available alongside the Annual Report 2024 on www.oberstown.com.

ICT developments

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) plays a key role in the care of young people on campus. Staff and management use the Oberstown Case Management System (OBCMS) to track and record the journey of young people through care. Oberstown employs a range of technologies to manage and share data among stakeholders. The campus uses digital and video technology to communicate with the courts, partner agencies and the families of young people.

The Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration (DJHAM) provides IT and infrastructure support for Oberstown. All core systems and data reside within DJHAM, with access strictly controlled via a secure portal or internal private network connection.

Incident response planning

Oberstown completed a Business Impact Assessment to assess the impact of a possible IT systems outage, submitting the results to DJHAM. Based on a risk assessment, Oberstown requested a prioritised recovery order of systems spanning different time intervals.

Oberstown CMS

The OBCMS continued to be enhanced and improved in line with user feedback, system audits, changing requirements and new work practices. During 2025, the system received 78 updates, enhancements and fixes.

Hub Court Lists Project

The Court List project is part of a DJHAM CJOH (Criminal Justice Operational Hub) multi-year programme. Its goal is to create a centralised electronic exchange enabling criminal justice organisations to send and receive data efficiently and securely.

Phase 2 of the project, rolled out early in 2025, filtered the automated feed of Court Lists (diary) information from the District and Higher Courts and removed data that was outside the scope of Oberstown. The result: a reduction in the Court List dataset from over 1,000 daily entries to about 50, making the review and maintenance task more manageable for staff.

Smartsheet

In 2025, Oberstown extended its use of the Smartsheet collaboration and work management solution, tracking and managing audits, the Oberstown Business Plan, and the HIQA Compliance Plan.

Microsoft Power Apps

The first set of live Power BI dashboards based on OBCMS data were published in 2025, covering bed management, incident tracking and visit tracking. These dashboards display key data summaries and allow for deeper analysis. Additional OBCMS-based dashboards are planned for 2026.

Softworks

Progress was made in 2025 in the successful use of Softworks, Oberstown's HR and payroll system. Improvements included a new approach for testing fixes that facilitated faster progress, along with prioritised access to development resources in the supplier organisation.

Health and safety

Inspections and audits

The Oberstown Health and Safety team facilitated a busy schedule of international and national audits, inspections and assessments in 2025, including:

- Onsite assessment and continued certification to ISO 45003, Occupational Health and Safety Management – Psychological Risk Management.
- Passed recertification audits of the Oberstown Occupational Health and Safety Management System (ISO 45001) and Quality Management System (ISO 9001).
- Maintained an 'A' level rating with the State Claims Agency (SCA) – the highest level achievable for reporting incidents on NIMS (National Incident Management System).

Risk and incident reporting

In 2025, daily unit risk assessments were recorded on the OBCMS. The Health and Safety team worked with external consultants to develop a new incident and action tracker for operational risk management and incident response.

Close collaboration with the SCA continued, including attending SCA Enterprise Risk Network events and developing Oberstown-specific templates and dashboards on the NIMS platform.

In 2025, there were 282 NIMS reportable incidents, representing a decrease from 343 reportable incidents in 2024.

Training and safety culture

Oberstown's use of the EazySAFE online platform grew in 2025.

Fire safety was a key focus, with five staff trained as fire safety trainers. The Health and Safety and Facilities teams worked with external consultants to update the fire safety management strategy, policy and fire safety training and inspections schedule. Dublin Fire Brigade ran an emergency training exercise on campus in May 2025.

A full schedule of safety intervention training sessions continued, and the onsite team of 12 CPI safety intervention instructors also received special training on the introduction of soft cuffs and safety pods.

Supporting young people

The Health and Safety team supports young people on campus through risk assessments, practical and technical advice on the physical environment and on vocational and educational projects. The team provides young people with training and certification in Manual Handling and Fire Safety Awareness.

HSA matters

Engagement with the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) in 2025 included reporting all notifiable incidents. There were 25 reportable incidents in 2025, up from 11 in 2024. In November, an onsite HSA inspection of Oberstown's recording and management of incidents resulted in a clean report.

HSA reportable incidents

2025: 25
2024: 11
2023: 17
2022: 24
2021: 23

Environmental and sustainability 2025

Oberstown continues to strengthen its commitment to environmental responsibility and sustainability, both through continued investment in climate action projects and embedding practical initiatives into campus life. Enhanced energy performance, new biodiversity initiatives, and a focus on campus and community engagement were key points of improvement for the campus during 2025.

In April, the Activities team led the project to install Oberstown's first beehives. The beehives promote biodiversity on campus and support important local ecosystems. Harvests of honey began in the summer, and both young people and staff have opportunities to visit the hives and learn about the bees.

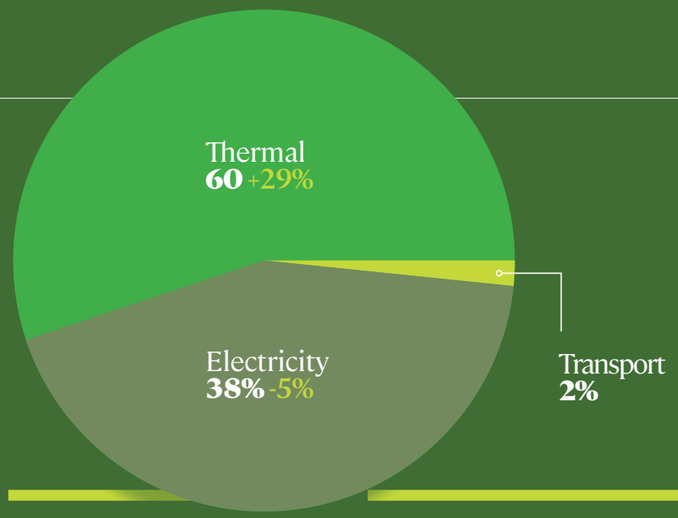
Oberstown is working to implement the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate, which sets the following targets for public bodies:

- Reduce energy-related GHG emissions by 51% by 2030.
- Improve energy efficiency in the public sector by 50% by 2030.
- Update Climate Action Roadmaps annually.

Goal 5 of the Oberstown Strategy 2022-2026 commits to "the sustainable development of our campus and our organisation." The Board of Management monitors environmental and sustainability performance through its Sustainability Committee, including approving the campus Energy Policy and updates to the Climate Action Roadmap.

Oberstown reports annual energy efficiency data through the SEAI's public sector energy monitoring and reporting system. The SEAI manages the reporting process on behalf of the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment. The campus also submits an annual statement on its compliance with the Climate Action Mandate. The campus reports on compliance with Circular 1/2020: Procedures for offsetting the emission associated with official air travel through DCDE.

The data provided on these pages shows Oberstown's progress during 2025 towards the Climate Action Mandate with reference to previous years and relevant baselines.



Total energy consumption 13.8% more than 2024

3,832,219 kWh

Total carbon emissions 5.3% more than 2024

845,222 kWh

THE PRIMARY FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE INCREASE IN THERMAL CONSUMPTION WERE HEAT LOSS IN TRINITY HOUSE AND UNIT 4 CAUSED BY POOR INSULATION, AS WELL AS ADJUSTMENTS NEEDED IN THE HEATING & VENTILATION SETTINGS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

2025 ENERGY INITIATIVES

- Energy Awareness Days in January and August.
- LED lighting upgrade continued.
- Installed high efficiency Natural Gas Boiler at Trinity House.
- Implemented a Building Energy Monitoring System (BEMS).
- Implemented an Energy Management System according to ISO 50001:2018.
- Developed and approved Oberstown Energy Policy.

FOSSIL CO_2 EMISSIONS

In 2025, **fossil CO_2 was 26% below the baseline** *(2016-2018) of 699,741 $kgCO_2$*

2025
517,929 $kgCO_2$

2030 Target
342,873 $kgCO_2$

To achieve this target, we must reduce fossil CO_2 by another 33.8% from 2025 level within 5 years

TOTAL CO_2 EMISSIONS

In 2025, **total CO_2 was 45.7% below the baseline** *(2016-2018) of 1,557,430 $kgCO_2$*

2025
845,222 $kgCO_2$

2030 Target
526,426 $kgCO_2$

To achieve this target, we must reduce total CO_2 by another 37.7% from 2025 level within 5 years

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

By 2025, **energy performance had improved by 56.4%** *since the baseline (2009)*

2025
56.4%

2030 Target
50%

If energy performance is maintained at this level for another 5 years, the efficiency target will be achieved

ENVIRONMENTAL & SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES

Biodiversity

In 2025, the National Biodiversity Data Centre confirmed the presence of the endangered Large Carder Bee on the Oberstown campus. Rodrigo Rufino, Oberstown's Environmental Sustainability Officer, engaged with Sustainable Skerries, a well-established local group with experience in protecting this bee species, to create a plan for its protection and conservation on campus. Sustainable Skerries offered their assistance to the campus to continue monitoring the presence of the Large Carder Bee at Oberstown, scheduled to start in March 2026.

In June 2025, Oberstown joined the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP), a framework that brings together different sectors across the island of Ireland to create a landscape where pollinators can survive and thrive. As a Business Supporter of the AIPP, Oberstown must complete a minimum of two actions per year from a list of 34 actions. Over the course of the year, Oberstown completed four actions (Actions 1, 2, 7 and 14) including:

- Map existing sources of food and shelter.
- Develop a plan to protect existing sources of food and shelter.
- Carry out a baseline ecological survey on site.
- Provide nesting habitat for bumblebees.

As part of this work, Oberstown also collaborated with a landscaper to create short and long-flowering meadows across the campus.

Campus participation

All staff on the Oberstown campus are encouraged to take part in sustainability initiatives running throughout the year. During 2025, staff engaged in a campus-wide waste sorting competition as well as biodiversity walks, energy management clinics and awareness campaigns.

The option for deeper engagement and leadership is also available through participation on the Environmental Team, made up of a group of 12 members of staff and chaired by the Environmental Sustainability Officer. The Environmental Team meets six times per year to discuss ideas and cross-departmental issues related to campus sustainability and the natural environment.

Actions taken by the Environmental Team include:

- Creating a Biodiversity Watching Week to promote awareness of biodiversity on campus.
- Exploring alternatives for eliminating all single-use plastic cups/containers from the campus kitchen.
- Developing a circular economy exchange initiative for staff to launch in January 2026.
- Supporting European Energy Sustainability Week programmes.
- Providing support during the audit for ISO 50001, the international environmental management standard.
- Seeking support for Asian hornet traps.

Young people on campus are actively involved in sustainability through initiatives such as the waste sorting competition and educational sessions provided by the Environmental Sustainability Officer. They also participate through the Campus Council, which raises and advises on campus issues that impact young people. Campus Council members have helped shaped the approach to sustainability issues on campus, including food waste and recycling management, by adding their unique perspectives both as young people and service users.

Young people celebrate ICCLA win

Campus Council members gathered for a special celebration recognising young people's part in Oberstown's 2025 ICCLA Award for Best Environmentally Conscious Workplace (Public Sector).

Rodrigo Rufino, Environmental Sustainability Officer, and Gráinne Smyth, Advocacy Officer, presented certificates to representatives from each unit to recognise the young people's contribution to campus sustainability initiatives, including taking part in the waste sorting competition and bringing forward ideas and actions leading to reducing food waste.

2025 INITIATIVES AND MILESTONES

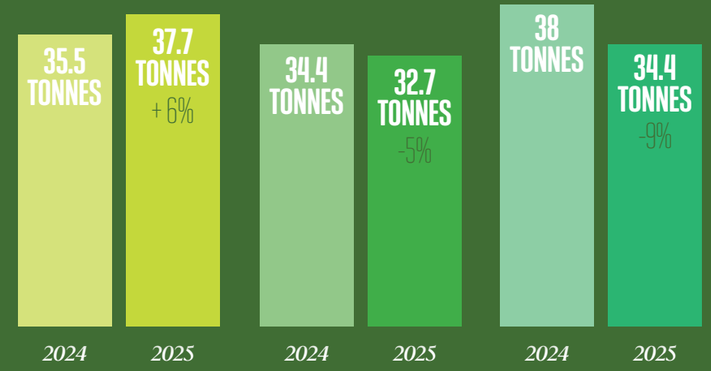
- Introduction of Monthly Environmental bulletins on Workvivo and notice boards.
- Energy and Sustainability Survey: 62% of participants find the events and information shared useful. The top three sustainability topics include: Energy savings; Food waste prevention and; Waste segregation and recycling.
- Finalist in the Workplace Excellence Awards & Ireland's Climate Change Leadership Awards.
- Winner of Ireland's Climate Change Leadership Awards as the "Best Environmentally Conscious Workplace – Public Sector 2025".
- 19 Young People participated in the Waste & Recycling Quiz.
- Training: 13 members of Environmental Team completed SEAI Energy Academy course "Leading Sustainable Change for Decarbonisation".
- Training: 86% of staff completed the "Environmental Awareness" course on EazySAFE and 31 new employees attended the in-person Environmental Awareness session.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

132 TONNES
Total waste generation 2% more than 2024

54% RECYCLING RATE
2023: 41% 2024: 54%

5% FOOD WASTE REDUCTION



44% LESS PAPER USAGE
2024: 368 reams / 184,000 sheets
2025: 206 reams / 103,000 sheets

BIODIVERSITY

- First time sighting on campus of a rare bumblebee species – Large Carder Bee (Bombus muscorum)
- Joined the All Pollinator Plan Programme as a business supporter
- Biodiversity walk in April

WATER

33m³
DAILY AVERAGE WATER USAGE
2024: 34m³
2% Reduction in water usage

Working at Oberstown

New approaches to frontline recruitment, along with continuing investment in the learning, skills, and development of our people, helped to bring in a record number of new staff in 2025.

Innovation in frontline recruitment

Oberstown's Human Resources team ran more than 27 public and internal campaigns for a series of operational and frontline roles, including a rolling year-long Residential Social Care Worker (RSCW) campaign. As part of these campaigns, Oberstown received approval for three new staff grades designed to support RSCWs on the ground in the present and provide clear, structured career development pathways for both current and future RSCWs. The three grades are: Day Supervising Officer (DSO), Assistant Unit Manager and Work-based Learning Student.

Day Supervising Officers (DSO)

The Oberstown senior management team created the DSO role in response to a need for day-to-day support for the Residential Social Care Workers (RSCWs) amid ongoing resourcing pressures. The DSO role is a support position focusing on escorting and moving young people around the campus, freeing up time for RSCWs to focus on direct therapeutic and developmental work with the young people.

An initial planned DSO cohort included 12 positions on two-year contracts. The first DSOs began work in November 2025, and nine of the initial 12 posts were on track to be filled by the end of January 2026.

Assistant Unit Managers

Oberstown developed the Assistant Unit Manager role to provide enhanced support to the current Unit Managers, increasing management presence and cover across day and night shift patterns. The creation of the role also enhances the career progression route for RSCWs, providing a clear, structured career development pathway.

Oberstown will begin advertising the Assistant Unit Manager role in early 2026.

Oberstown staff quick facts 2025

RECRUITMENT

27 recruitment campaigns

32 positions available

170 interviews

41 new staff

2 students on work-based learning placements

7 student placements

160 final year social care students visited campus from 5 universities

ENGAGEMENT

Total headcount at end of 2025: **264**

21 of 23 staff recruited in 2024 still in post at end-2025

5 staff promoted in 2025

15 staff on funded education courses in 2025

68% of staff with a tenure over 5 years

MILESTONE WORK ANNIVERSARIES

12 celebrated 5 years
5 celebrated 10 years
5 celebrated 20 years
10 celebrated 25 years
6 celebrated 30 years
9 employees retired

> **There's staff and people inside here who would motivate you. Like, they wouldn't force or anything, they'd motivate you and say it'd be good for you. You can change your whole life in this place.**
>
> **Young person**

The ISO 45003 certification project team. L-R: Yvette Ennis, CRPF Project Lead; Laoise Manners, Health and Safety; Cara Driscoll, Organisational Psychologist; Micheál Craven, Health Safety and Risk Officer; Rose Murray, Deputy Director.

Work-Based Learning Students

In October 2025, Oberstown welcomed two students on the new work-based learning programme for social care. The initiative is designed to provide successful candidates with structured, on-the-job learning opportunities in social care in addition to attending academic training and study at University College Cork. This initiative is a pilot scheme and is the first of its kind in Ireland for social care workers. Only two organisations in Ireland took part in its inaugural year: Oberstown (2 students) and Tusla (25 students).

HR policies update

A project to update HR policies continued in 2025. The HR team collaborated with the Board of Management's People and Culture Committee, unions and staff across the campus to update policies. The project to create a new Employee Handbook will commence in 2026 and is expected to be completed in 2027.

CORU registration update

On 1 December 2025, "social care worker" became a protected title in Ireland, meaning only those registered with CORU, the health and social care regulator, can work as "social care workers" in Ireland.

In 2024, Oberstown initiated the process of supporting eligible staff to register with CORU, the health and social care regulator through regular CORU clinics held on campus. At the end of 2024, 105 members of staff were accepted onto the CORU Register of Social Workers. By the close of 2025, 139 staff were fully registered with CORU and 24 staff were awaiting CORU approval. In total, 163 out of 166 eligible staff had registered or were waiting approval for registration from CORU between the start of the project in 2024 and the end of 2025.

Practice supervision

Practice supervision was introduced to strengthen professional support for staff in a high-pressure, emotionally demanding environment. It is a separate initiative from performance management. Practice Supervision was embedded in 2025. Over 130 staff were scheduled to attend either one-to-one or group supervision. Twenty-three groups take place every five to six weeks. Additionally, one-to-one supervision is available for all employees on campus.

After the first 12 months of supervision delivery, an internal mixed methods review was undertaken. Staff reported supervision as providing a safe, supportive, and reflective space that fostered connection, cohesion and peer support. It was reported by staff as providing an opportunity for personal growth and increased self-awareness.

WORKING WELL 2025

Working Well guides the planning, delivery and review of psychosocial resilience, health and sustained wellbeing considerations for Oberstown employees.

In 2025, the campus retained its ISO 45003 certification, the global standard providing guidance on management of psychosocial risks and promotion of wellbeing at work. Oberstown also maintained the Ibec KeepWell Mark for a fifth year running and was listed among Ireland's Top 100 Leaders in Workplace Wellbeing.

bsi
ISO 45003
Psychological Health and Safety at Work
CERTIFIED

ISO 45003 certification followed an on-site audit in November. The working group included representatives from a range of teams and departments, underlining the value of cross-campus collaboration in action.

Several strengths were highlighted during the assessment. These included:

- Creation of the Nutrition Committee.
- Provision of the new break amenity space for all staff.
- Delivery of DSE assessments and outcomes.
- The quality of system and supporting documentation, and the use of incident reporting, investigation, and debrief to support learning outcomes.
- Recertification of the KeepWell Mark in June 2025.

In 2025, key achievements under Oberstown's Working Well Framework included:

Work Safe

- Continuing professional development for the Peer Support Worker team.
- Recruitment of facilitators to train in-house suicide prevention and a self-harm mitigation programme.

Work Well

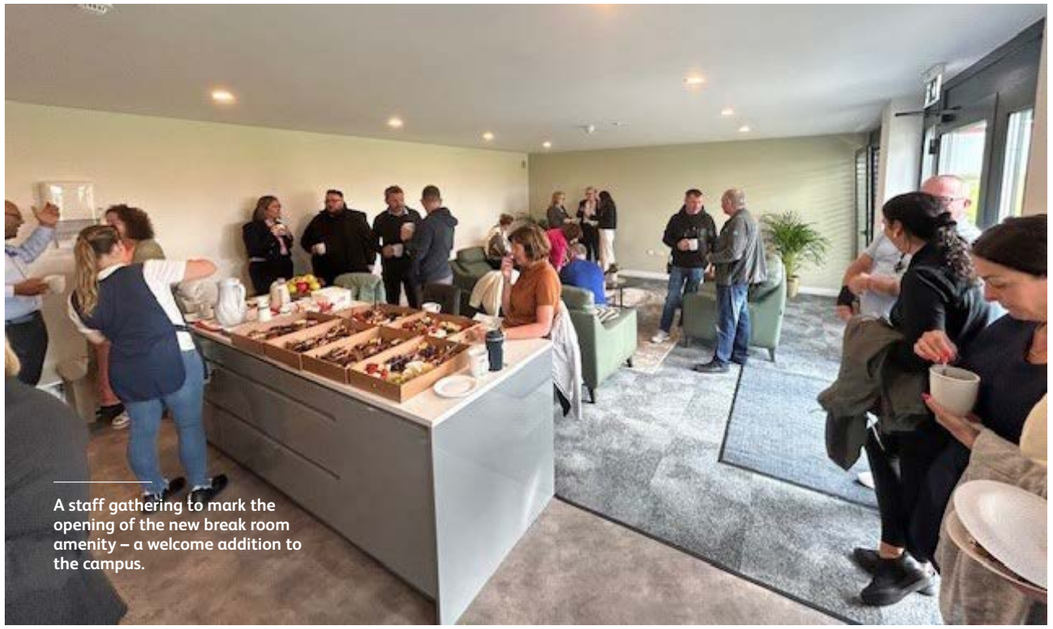
- In-house campus support provided access to counselling for staff.

Work Healthy

- Bespoke health screening available to all staff.
- Catering team maintained ISO 9001/2015 certification and developed enhanced menus.
- Stop smoking supports available for staff.

Work Wise

- HR policy review ongoing.
- Development of working papers for bereavement in service, suicide and self-harm protocols, cancer care policy and support.



A staff gathering to mark the opening of the new break room amenity – a welcome addition to the campus.

Throughout 2025, Practice Supervision was also evaluated by external regulator and accreditation bodies HIQA, BSI (for ISO 45003) and Ibec (for the KeepWell Mark). These external bodies reviewed Practice Supervision within Oberstown's policy as well as the wider Working Well framework. In its post-assessment report, Ibec referred to Practice Supervision as a "strength" and noted that "staff have a clear appreciation of the supervision sessions and continue to directly benefit from supervision implementation." HIQA inspectors also assess Practice Supervision and noted the following: "Overall, practice supervision delivered by the Organisational Psychologist was being delivered on a consistent basis and in line with policy. Inspectors reviewed a sample of group supervision and individual supervision records and found that these were of good quality and relevant topics for reflection were discussed."

Equality and human rights

Oberstown's EDI (equality, diversity and inclusion) approach includes a full commitment to the implementation of the public sector equality and human rights duty, as set out in section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014. The Oberstown Strategy 2022-2026 reflects these values and fulfils the organisation's responsibility to promote equality and human rights among its staff, young people, service users and everyone affected by its policies and plans.

GENDER PAY GAP REPORT

Oberstown's employees are paid within national consolidated pay scales. As a result, there is no gender pay gap for Oberstown employees in the same roles with the same tenure.

As public sector employees, Oberstown employees do not receive bonuses. Similarly, a benefits in kind (BIK) calculation is not relevant to the Oberstown workforce.

Average

Female: €35.11 per hour **Male:** €39.05 per hour

Oberstown's male employees earn an average of 10.08 % more per hour compared to their female colleagues.

Median

Female: €34.00 per hour **Male:** €38.76 per hour

Oberstown's median male hourly salary is 2.94 % higher than the median female salary per hour.

Among part-time staff, male part-time employees earn 3.34 % more per hour on average than female employees. This is influenced by the higher proportion of women working part-time (45.29 %) compared with men (11.85 %) at Oberstown.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A RESIDENTIAL SOCIAL CARE WORKER

Richard

Residential Social Care Worker

Joined Oberstown in 2023

Why did you pursue a career in social care?

In 2007, I went to India with my dad and worked with people with disabilities and people from the slums and children on the street. From then on, I knew I wanted to pursue a career in working with people. I ended up working for 10 years as a direct support worker in the disability sector, and then I went back to school to get the social care stamp and got the Level 7 with Open Training College. I came to Oberstown as part of my placement during year three of the programme.

Why did you choose a placement at Oberstown?

At Oberstown, I was able to learn more about the Children Act and the experience gave me a whole new chapter that I could speak about on the academic side of my course. Staff really supported me on the journey and displayed a variety of skills and knowledge that inspired me to come and work here on campus.

I started on placement with two other students on my course, and all three of us are now care staff working here. It's great to see us all go through the whole process,

How would you explain your role as a Residential Social Care Worker at Oberstown?

We're a jack of all trades and master of all. There's so much involved in the role of a social care worker. We operate on the CEHOP® model, so we're intertwining ourselves through the care, education, health, offending behaviour, and preparation for leaving of the young people.

It's all based on trust, so a real difference can be made for the young people who may have never had anyone that really cared for them. And we're here to really support them through a tough time in their lives and to show them avenues to make a real difference for their futures. I've seen real work being done here.

How does a day begin at Oberstown?

To maintain continuity and safety, we begin each day with a detailed handover and an actionable plan for the shift ahead.

The young people have visits from family, hospital trips, court trips, visits with multi-disciplinary teams like Tusla Assessment, Consultation and Therapy Service (ACTS) or Forensic Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (FCAMHS). Then you have the daily school, activities, and visits from external organisations. There will also be young people leaving or arriving on the campus. So, you schedule your day around all that.

What's the biggest challenge in your day?

We'll be managing behaviours of concern or any kind of a negative atmosphere on the unit, which does happen. When there's young people who just don't see eye-to-eye, that can be hard to manage when tensions reach a certain state. Managing conflict, like peer-to-peer conflicts, is probably one of the most challenging things technically, but I don't find it a challenge as such because my response is always about supporting them. But it can be tough because you don't want to see anybody in any kind of bother.

How do you work with the other staff on the unit?

We embrace a truly collaborative approach across the entire campus. If a child needs extra attention, colleagues naturally step in to help. You might feel like you're not getting through to a young person, and you can call in another Residential Social Care Worker to swap out or maybe approach a restorative conversation together.

Some staff are just amazing to watch, and I've learned so much from seeing how they approach different situations.

2025 YEAR IN THE LIFE JANUARY-APRIL

A selection of highlights on campus and beyond

The future of social care

Final-year social care students from Munster Technological University (MTU) visited the campus in March to learn about career opportunities and the unique environment at Oberstown.

Oberstown has an established programme for social care student undergraduates and offers both student placements and early career experience for new graduates. By the end of 2025, over 160 final-year students visited the campus on information-sharing visits from five universities: Munster Technological University, South East Technological University, Dundalk Institute of Technology, Technological University Dublin, and Atlantic Technological University.

Above: Gráinne Smyth, Advocacy Officer, presents to social care students visiting from MTU.

Project bees

Potential is a shared focus for all at Oberstown, and few creatures are more representative of 'potential' than bees. In April, the Activities team introduced beehives in the market garden behind Trinity House School. The beehives promote biodiversity on campus and support important local ecosystems. They are also a powerful education tool for young people, who not only have an opportunity to deepen their understanding of bees but who have found meaning and connection through their work with the hives.

Harvests in the apiary began in the summer, and the development of a beekeeping course for the young people will take place in 2026.

Right: Tadeusz Szczesniak (Night Supervising Officer and qualified beekeeper) in the Oberstown apiary.

Learning together

Oberstown delegates attend events on campus, across Ireland and abroad throughout the year. The campus also regularly hosts fellow youth justice leaders, community stakeholders, and international visitors.

In April, Director Damien Hernon was invited to speak at an invitation-only event marking 10 years of the Traveller Justice Initiative (TJI). The event was attended by over 70 people working across the justice sector, Traveller organisations, community groups, philanthropic partners and civil society to reflect on a decade of how TJI's work has influenced policy, practice, and culture.

Later in the same month, the campus hosted representatives from HIQA, the Garda National Youth Diversion Bureau, the Ombudsman for Children's Office, the Irish Prison Service, and the Irish Penal Reform Trust for the closing session in the Data MOSAIC (MOnitoring the SAfety of Imprisoned Children) project, run by Penal Reform International. Gráinne Smyth, Advocacy Officer, led Oberstown's input to this international project with the support of Unit Managers, care staff and others across campus.

Also in April, a group of care staff, along with support from Deputy Director Rose Murray and Unit and Site Managers, represented the campus at the Social Care Ireland Annual Conference in Dundalk.

Above: Oberstown Director Damien Hernon with Anne Costello, Traveller Justice Initiative Coordinator.

Partners in professional development

Stakeholder education on Oberstown's service takes place year-round, both on campus and at professional events around Ireland. In February and March, Advocacy Officer Gráinne Smyth and Unit Managers Aaron Kelly and Niamh Carroll gave presentations as part of a Garda continuing professional education training course. They travelled to Store Street Garda station in Dublin to talk to Garda Case Managers about life on campus for young people and how Oberstown supports them through the CEHOP® framework.

Members of the gardaí and the judiciary also visited campus at several points during the year for tours and conversations with campus managers and frontline staff.

Sharing the power of forgiveness

On the Tuesday after St. Brigid's Day, the Forgiveness Project welcomed a visit from Bridget Taylor. She spoke to the young people about her Christian faith and how her journey through faith impacted not only her story but the story of her children, including Olympic boxing champion, Katie Taylor. Bridget also brought along some of Katie Taylor's belts and trophies for the young people to see and try on for size.

The Forgiveness Project is a Tuesday evening group for young people and is facilitated by the Oberstown Chaplain. The group is a space to explore the power and restoration forgiveness brings through scripture, sharing and lived experiences. The life stories of special visitors invite reflection and offer inspiration to young people and staff attendees.

2025 YEAR IN THE LIFE

MAY-AUGUST

A selection of highlights on campus and beyond

5th World Congress on Justice with Children

In June, Oberstown Director Damien Hernon led a workshop at the 5th World Congress on the Global Initiative on Justice With Children (JWC) alongside delegates from Ireland's Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO). Oberstown delegates travelled to this major international event in Madrid, organised by the Terre des hommes-Lausanne Foundation and Penal Reform International (PRI), along with the International Association of Youth and Family Judges and Magistrates (IAYFJM), and the Global Campus of Human Rights (GC). The Congress theme was "Advancing Child-Centred Justice: Preventing and responding to violence affecting children in child justice systems."

Below: (Left to right): Gráinne Smyth, Advocacy Officer; Damien Hernon, Director; Yvette Ennis, CRPF Project Lead; Jess Feeney, RSCW.

Inside Oberstown special feature

Newstalk reporter Josh Crosbie visited Oberstown in August and interviewed Director Damien Hernon, John Smith, Activities Coordinator, and young people.

The Newstalk team produced a radio segment in September for Newstalk's *The Hard Shoulder* followed by a short video package 'Inside Oberstown' in November.

Left: Josh Crosbie (right) interviews Oberstown's John Smith.

Watching life hatch

The Cock-a-Doodle-Doo school hatching programme gave Oberstown young people a hands-on opportunity to learn about life cycles and animal care. Five fertilised chicken eggs arrived at the Oberstown Campus School, and several young people witnessed the baby chicks hatch.

Oberstown School Teachers and the Oberstown Activities team supported the young people in building a chicken coop in the market garden, where the chickens continue to live.

Left: Newly-hatched chick delights young people in the Oberstown Campus School.

Ministerial visit

Minister for Children, Disability, and Equality, Norma Foley TD, visited the campus in June. The Minister met the Director, Chair and senior management along with staff, teachers and young people during a tour of the campus facilities.

Above: Oberstown's Emma Keane serves Minister Foley at the campus coffee van.

Giving back

Fundraising for community organisations close to the hearts of Oberstown's young people take place year-round across the campus. In 2025, Oberstown young people and staff raised money through creative and exercise challenges for organisations including Solas Project, The Cancer Support Centre in Waterford, Solas Cancer Support Centre, My Canine Companion, Pieta House and St. Francis Hospice.

Above: Éanna Rutherford (Solas Project) receives a cheque from Gráinne Smyth, Advocacy Officer.

NOTA International 2025

In May, Oberstown attended the NOTA International Conference in Belfast. NOTA (National Organisation for the Treatment of Abuse) is a UK-based network providing support and resources for professionals whose work concerns intervention with sexually aggressive individuals. Oberstown delegates included Head of Care Michelle Griffin, Unit Managers Declan O'Donnell and Niamh Carroll, Programmes facilitator Sam Maund, and Aaron Swift and Angela Tuite from the ACTS team.

Left: (Left to right): Declan O'Donnell, Michelle Griffin, broadcaster Miriam O'Callaghan, Niamh Carroll, Aaron Swift.

Life stories

In August, Advocacy Officer Gráinne Smyth gave a presentation outlining how Oberstown helps young people develop their life story, at the Youth Advocate Programmes (YAP) Ireland National Event at Croke Park. The conference theme 'My Story' celebrated the achievements and experiences of YAP staff and collaborators working with young people and their families.

Learning, sharing and collaborating in 2025

Each year, delegates from Oberstown travel to conferences and seminars in Ireland and across Europe to represent the campus through presentations, on panels and as exhibitors.

In 2025, we attended:

- Social Care Ireland Annual Conference 2025 – 2 April 2025
- Celebration of 10 years of the Traveller Justice Initiative – 9 April 2025
- NOTA International Conference – 15-16 May 2025
- 5th World Congress on Justice with Children – 2-4 June 2025
- ACJRD's 28th Annual Conference 2025 – 12 June 2025
- The Victims' Forum (Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration) – 4 July 2025
- YAP Ireland National Event – 12 August 2025
- 11th Irish Criminal Justice Agencies Conference – 10 October 2025
- Creative Ireland Shared Ireland Conference – 13 November 2025

2025 YEAR IN THE LIFE SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER

A selection of highlights on campus and beyond

Youth Justice in Motion

Oberstown was the lead partner of the 11th Irish Criminal Justice Agencies (ICJA) conference, "Youth Justice in Motion: Prevention, Intervention, Contribution."

The national conference brought together leaders and practitioners from across the criminal justice sector to share innovative approaches to preventing youth offending, intervening effectively, and empowering young people's voices in reform.

Held at the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA) in Kilmainham, Dublin, the full-day event considered how the youth justice system can better prevent crime by addressing root causes early, intervene with supports when young people are in crisis, and recognise the contribution of young people as active agents of change in their communities.

The conference was a collaboration of Ireland's criminal justice agencies – the Department of Children, Disability and Equality; the Department of Justice; An Garda Síochána; the Courts Service; the Probation Service and more – and was hosted by the Association for Criminal Justice Research and Development (ACJRD). Oberstown Director Damien Hernon and Chair Koulla Yiasouma presented at the opening session alongside speakers including President of the District Court Mr. Justice Paul Kelly and Ombudsman for Children Dr. Niall Muldoon. Oberstown Head of Care, Michelle Griffin, presented at a workshop session on girls in the criminal justice system.

Above: Campus representatives at the ACJRD conference at IMMA. Left to right: Matthew Kelly, Niamh Carroll, Aaron Kelly, Emma Shanahan, Aaron Swift, Lorraine Connolly, Geraldine Martin, Sinéad Harris, Jade Connor.

Careers Day

Oberstown hosted its second Young People's Careers Day at the end of October. Every young person on campus had the chance to meet representatives from 13 organisations offering careers, vocational education opportunities and advice.

Returning supporters Designer Group, Jungheinrich, Way2Work, Image Fitness, Teagasc, Gaisce – The President's Award, Fastrack into Information Technology (FIT) and Mr. Price were joined by first-time exhibitors Candle, CSL Scaffolding, ABM Security, EMG Heating & Plumbing, Up the Yard Landscaping, Three Little Birds Cafe and Mace construction consultancy.

Right: Young people discuss their future ambitions with Way 2 Work.

Nurturing Schools Ireland

Principal Suzanne Fitzpatrick along with several teachers represented Oberstown and presented at the 2025 Nurturing Schools Ireland National Conference in November. Their presentation "Embedding Nurture at Oberstown: A Journey of Growth, Connection and Belonging" was well received by the audience of 280 educators committed to creating environments where every student feels safe.

WE ARE Children First

Children First Awareness Week

Oberstown marked National Children First Awareness Week between 15 and 22 September. Children First sets out what individuals and organisations need to do to keep children safe and how to deal with concerns about a child's safety or welfare. To raise awareness, Oberstown's Designated Liaison Person, Bill Byrne provided education on the responsibilities of a mandated reporter and additional sources of information on Workvivo, the campus internal communications platform.

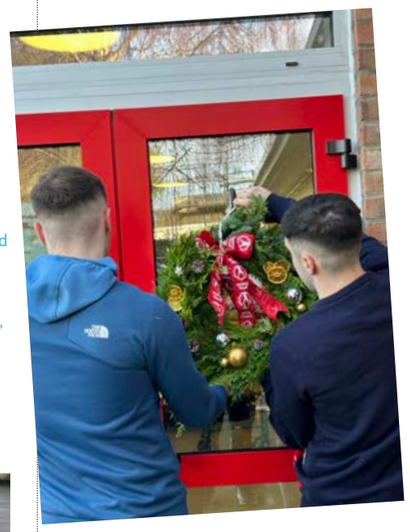
Penal Reform International recognise young people's work

Penal Reform International sent 'thank you' gifts (pictured above) to the campus in December, recognising the work of the Oberstown young people who contributed to international research into child-friendly justice. Gráinne Smyth, Advocacy Officer, played Santa's Helper, delivering a new set of games for the young people to enjoy.

Award-winning workplace

In October, Oberstown won the Irish Climate Change Leadership Award (ICCLA) 2025 for Best Environmentally Conscious Workplace – Public Sector. The campus was also shortlisted in three other ICCLA awards categories: Best Public Sector Organisation, Small Sustainability Team of the Year and Sustainability Strategy of the Year. Environmental Sustainability Officer Rodrigo Rufino led the award submission project and organised a ceremony to celebrate the win with members of the Campus Council, acknowledging the part young people play in environmental initiatives on campus.

Right: Rodrigo Rufino, Environmental Sustainability Officer, at the ICCLA Awards.



A time for giving

Young people took part in Oberstown's annual festive community-focused project, putting their horticultural, woodworking, ceramics, and sewing skills to work making Christmas wreaths, centrepieces, and decorations as gifts for their families, charities and local organisations.

A selection of wreaths and centrepieces were delivered to the Lusk Community Nursing Home, where two young people met with residents and helped decorate the facility. The Oberstown School Christmas Craft Fair and the Christmas Garden Fete gave staff more opportunities to buy the young people's festive offerings, raising funds for Pieta House, My Canine Companion and Solas Project.

One young person also joined the Catering team to help serve up the annual Christmas dinner to senior citizens at the Man O' War GAA club. Oberstown has organised the annual festive event every year for more than 30 years, led by the Household and Catering teams and attended by senior management and staff.

Left: Young people hang Christmas wreaths at the Lusk Community Nursing Home.

World champion visit

Sporting legend Katie Taylor visited Oberstown in September, meeting young people and staff and sharing her inspirational story of personal faith and growth. This was the second visit from the world champion and Olympic gold medal winning boxer, coordinated through the Oberstown Chaplain. Katie and her mother Bridget gave their time generously, ensuring that they met all the young people on campus and posing for commemorative photographs. In keeping with Katie's personal, faith-based reasons for wanting to share her message with the Oberstown community, there was no fanfare or social media profile for these events – just genuinely uplifting occasions for all.

Right: Katie Taylor and Cian McDonald, RSCW.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Implementing the Oberstown Strategy 2025 progress update

Appendix 2

Board of Management meeting attendance
January - December 2025

Audit and Risk Committee attendance
January - December 2025

Governance & Strategy Committee attendance
January - December 2025

Performance Committee attendance
January - December 2025

People & Culture Committee attendance
January - December 2025

Sustainability Committee attendance
January - December 2025

Young People Committee attendance
January - December 2025

Board of Management meeting attendance totals
January - December 2025

Appendix 3

Board Fees Paid in respect of January - December 2025

Board members exempt from payment under OPOS (one person one salary)

Appendix 4

The 12 Campus Rules – young people version

Appendix 1

Implementing the Oberstown Strategy 2025 progress update

Implementing the Oberstown Strategy 2022-2026 and its associated annual business plan is a key focus for current and future operations. In 2025, the Director, the Senior Management Team and staff teams worked to progress the organisational priorities set out in the business plan, providing monthly progress updates to the Board of Management.

The Oberstown strategy has Strategic Goals covering five key areas of activity:

1. **Care of young people at Oberstown**
2. **Staff wellbeing and development**
3. **Partnerships**
4. **Transparency and accountability**
5. **Sustainability**

2025 Progress

Goal 1: We will provide the best possible child-centred, individualised, rights-based care and education to young people

Expanding programmes for young people on campus.

A significant achievement in 2025 was the expansion of the range of programmes available to young people. EPIC introduced a new initiative on campus called 'Boys in the Making', which provides young people with structured opportunities for personal development and reflection.

Review of the Placement Planning Meeting process

The Placement Planning Meeting (PPM) process was reviewed and updated in 2025. The review examined how young people and their families are included in placement decisions, and its findings were presented to the Board's Young People Committee. The updated PPM procedure was finalised and submitted for implementation. This work strengthens the rights-based foundation of Oberstown's case planning approach by ensuring that the voices of young people and their families are central to decisions affecting them.

Targeting work, education and vocational opportunities on leaving

Considerable effort went into building concrete pathways for young people as they transition out of Oberstown. Links were established with the Traveller Appreciate Programme, a targeted initiative supporting Traveller young people in accessing community and employment opportunities. A partnership was formed with retailer Mr Price, through which several young people secured employment. Work experience opportunities were established with Java Republic, providing real-world exposure to a professional work environment. These achievements reflect Oberstown's determination to ensure that every young person leaves campus with some form of meaningful connection to employment, education, or community life.

Review of the Children's Rights Policy Framework

The review of the Children's Rights Policy Framework (CRPF) was completed in 2025, representing one of the most substantive pieces of policy work undertaken during the year. A dedicated review group was established, and working groups examined specific sections of the framework drawing on input from both internal staff and external stakeholders. This work ensures that Oberstown's overarching policy framework continues to reflect contemporary standards in rights-based detention and child welfare practice.

Goal 2: We will foster a culture of leadership, learning and resilience among our staff

Embedding practice supervision across campus

Practice supervision was successfully embedded across all relevant disciplines on campus, representing a major achievement in the professionalisation of Oberstown's workforce. Attendance metrics were shared monthly with managers to support follow-up and accountability, and an average attendance rate of 76% was recorded in the first quarter of 2025, exceeding the 70% target. This achievement reflects sustained organisational commitment to reflective practice and professional oversight, which are central to the quality of care young people receive.

Developing the Workforce Framework and introducing new roles

A new Workforce Framework was developed and implemented during 2025, with a particular focus on addressing service needs, succession planning, and the ongoing national shortage of social care workers. Four significant new roles were introduced as part of this work: a Training Site Manager for RSCWs, a Staff Nurse within the Medical Department, an assistant Unit Manager, and a Day Supervising Officer. The strategic objectives of the framework were achieved through the practical establishment of these roles. This investment in new posts reflects Oberstown's long-term thinking about workforce sustainability and career development pathways for staff.

Graduate and Work-based Learning Programme

Oberstown became one of only two organisations in Ireland, alongside Tusla, to participate in a pilot Work-Based Learning Programme for Social Care Workers in partnership with UCC and MTU. Two staff members commenced the programme during 2025, and three second-year students completed their placements and moved on to relief contracts. Throughout the year, four college groups and 160 social care work student groups were hosted on campus, reinforcing Oberstown's identity as a learning and practice development organisation.

Influencing the social care academic curriculum

Oberstown played an active role in shaping how social care is taught and understood at third level in 2025. Seminars and presentations were delivered at MTU, DKIT, STU, and ATU, with 53 social care work students from ATU visiting campus during the year. Employment and placement opportunities were circulated to fourth-year social care students nationally, and Oberstown is engaged with several institutions in planning future programme content. These efforts are not only building a talent pipeline but are also contributing to the wider sector's understanding of youth detention and rights-based practice.

CORU registration

Significant progress was achieved on CORU registration in 2025, with 139 staff members fully registered and a further 24 registrations awaiting sign-off by year end. Work began on developing a CPD framework to support the requirement for 30 credits per year from 2026 onwards. Achieving CORU registration for the workforce is a statutory obligation and a mark of professional standing, and this progress ensures that Oberstown's frontline staff meet national standards for social care practice.

Psychological Health and Safety — ISO 45003 recertification

Oberstown successfully maintained and renewed its ISO 45003 certification – the international standard for psychological health and safety at work – following a formal audit in 2025. Work Positive initiatives were delivered as part of the wellbeing programme, and a tender for Critical Incident Management training was finalised and a contract awarded for delivery in 2026. Retaining this certification demonstrates Oberstown's commitment to managing psychosocial risk in a high-pressure working environment and to protecting the mental health of all staff.

Goal 3: We will partner with families, communities, agencies and services to deliver the best possible outcomes for our young people.

National and international engagement on rights-based detention

Oberstown's national and international profile grew considerably in 2025. The Data Mosaic project, delivered in collaboration with Penal Reform International (PRI), was brought to a successful conclusion with a high-profile event on campus on 29 April 2025, attended by national and international stakeholders. This project positioned Oberstown as a European reference point for rights-based approaches to youth detention. The Walk in My Shoes project, developed with the Netherlands Helsinki Committee and Young in Prison, continued to engage Board members and staff in first-hand perspectives on the experience of detention. A new research collaboration with PRI also commenced during the year, focusing on the procedural rights of children in court settings — particularly the implications of video link appearances.

Oberstown delivered three workshops at the World Youth Justice Congress, which convenes only once every five years, and served as the lead organisation and main sponsor for the 11th Annual Irish Criminal Justice Agencies (ICJA) Conference in October 2025. The organisation also presented at the 10th Anniversary of the Traveller Justice Initiative, contributing to national conversations on the over-representation of Traveller young people in the justice system. Active engagement was maintained with Swedish and Finnish counterparts, the North/South Youth Justice Advisory Group, and the 18-24 diversion group throughout the year.

Multi-agency working in support of CEHOP®

Oberstown led and participated actively in a wide range of multi-agency working groups during 2025 in support of its CEHOP® framework. A register of engagement was maintained and reviewed regularly. Active partnerships were sustained with the Probation Service, An Garda Síochána, Youth Diversion Programmes, EPIC, IPRT, the Ombudsman for Children, the President of the District Court, the Oireachtas Committee on Key Issues affecting the Traveller Community, YAP, and Social Care Ireland. This breadth of engagement reflects Oberstown's collaborative ethos and its determination to ensure that the young person remains at the centre of all inter-agency activity.

Community relations

Oberstown continued to invest in its role as a good neighbour in 2025. A community mural initiative was delivered in partnership with Man O'War GAA Club, and Oberstown prepared and served its annual Christmas dinner for local Senior Citizens. Young People engaged in community-facing activities, including a Christmas wreath-making initiative at Lusk Community Nursing Home and a weekly contribution to a Meals on Wheels service for senior citizens. These initiatives provide young people with opportunities to contribute positively to the community while building confidence and pro-social identity.

Goal 4: We will ensure that our governance, practices and decision making are transparent, data-driven and evidence-based.

Establishing a research programme

Oberstown established an active research programme in 2025, entering a project partnership with the National Open Research Forum on Criminal Justice Ireland. This partnership reflects Oberstown's commitment to grounding its practice and policy positions in current evidence, and to contributing to the wider knowledge base in youth justice in Ireland and internationally.

Stakeholder transparency and external engagement events

A new internal stakeholder engagement format – Quarterly Updates – was introduced in 2025, replacing the previous Town Hall model, with the first sessions commencing in March. These events provide a regular, structured forum for staff to engage with organisational progress and priorities. A roundtable event was held in October, bringing together a broad range of internal and external stakeholders. Oberstown also led the ACRJD's ICJA Conference in October 2025, a significant national event in the justice sector calendar. Together these initiatives reflect Oberstown's commitment to being an open, accountable organisation that actively engages its stakeholders.

Goal 5: We will promote the sustainable development of the Oberstown Campus and the organisation.

Campus capacity planning and trends analysis

A monthly point-in-time analysis of the number and characteristics of young people on campus was established and is now a regular feature of Board meetings. This data provides an ongoing evidence base for conversations with external partners about the future needs and capacity of the campus. DCDE is also leading a broader research initiative on Oberstown's future needs, informed by this analysis. Having this regular data embedded in Board governance is an important step in ensuring that strategic decisions are grounded in current evidence.

Environmental policy and programme

Oberstown's Environmental Policy and Programme 2023-2026 was progressed during 2025. The campus participated in the national Reduce Your Use Campaign, and the environmental team worked with external partners to address food waste on campus. A Green Public Procurement (GPP) Register was established in line with Circular 17/2025, embedding sustainable procurement practices across all relevant purchasing activity. Staff attended GPP training, and GPP criteria were incorporated into tender documentation. SEAI reporting and monitoring was maintained in alignment with the Buying Green Public Procurement Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2027.

Climate action

Oberstown progressed its commitments under the Government's Climate Action Plan during 2025, working actively towards ISO 50001 energy management certification in partnership with the SEAI. The first stage of the ISO 50001 audit commenced in December 2025. The campus Building Management System (BMS) was upgraded to enhance real-time energy monitoring and improve the quality of reporting data. These steps reflect a structured and measurable approach to reducing energy consumption and carbon impact.

Health and Safety — ISO 45001 recertification

A comprehensive review of health and safety across the campus was completed during 2025, encompassing policies, procedures, roles and responsibilities, and departmental structures. Oberstown successfully retained its ISO 45001 certification following a formal inspection in February 2025, with recertification awarded. Maintaining this international standard for occupational health and safety management demonstrates Oberstown's ongoing commitment to the wellbeing and safety of all staff and young people on campus.

Capital programme delivery

The 2025 capital budget of €2.25 million was received and invested across three priority projects: the OPW-led demolition of Buildings 1 and 2, which had reached the end of their operational life; an upgrade of campus lighting to LED, in support of energy efficiency targets; and ongoing capital maintenance works.

Energy monitoring and reporting

Energy consumption monitoring was maintained throughout 2025, with usage data reported to the SEAI and the upgraded BMS providing enhanced tracking metrics. Ongoing progress was made towards ISO 50001 certification. These efforts ensure that Oberstown is not only measuring its energy use but actively managing it in line with national and organisational sustainability commitments.

Appendix 2

Table 1

Board of Management meeting attendance

January – December 2025

Name	Jan 16	Feb 20	Mar 26	May 1	Jun 5	Jul 3	Aug 28	Oct 2	Nov 6	Dec 18	No. of eligible meetings	Total attended
Koulla Yiasouma	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	10	10
Brian Arnold	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	10	10
David Byrne [1]	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	•	•	2	2
Bernadette Costello	○	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	10	9
Elizabeth Davey	•	•	•	•	•	•	○	•	•	•	10	9
Jennifer Gargan	○	•	•	•	•	•	•	○	•	•	10	8
John McDaid [2]	•	•	•	•	•	–	–	–	–	–	5	5
Úna Ní Dhubhghaill [3]	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	–	–	–	7	7
Liz O'Neill	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	10	10
William O'Rourke	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	○	○	10	8
Martin Quigley	•	•	○	•	•	•	○	○	•	•	10	7
Fergal Reynolds	○	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	○	10	8
Emma Shanahan	○	•	•	•	•	○	•	•	○	•	10	7
Dymphna Sherry	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	10	10

Notes
1. David Byrne's term commenced on 15 September 2025
2. John McDaid's term ended on 30 June 2025
3. Úna Ni Dhubhghaill's term ended on 15 September 2025

Legend:
- • Attended
- ○ Not Attended

Table 2

Audit and Risk Committee attendance

January – December 2024

Name	Feb 6	Mar 20	Jun 12	Aug 14	Nov 4	Dec 15	No. of eligible meetings	Total attended
Bernadette Costello (Chair)	•	•	•	•	•	•	6	6
Koulla Yiasouma	○	•	•	•	○	•	6	4
John McDaid [1]	•	•	○	–	–	–	3	2
Jennifer Gargan	•	•	•	•	•	•	6	6
Elizabeth Davey	•	•	•	•	•	•	6	6

Notes
1. John McDaid's term ended on 30 June 2025

Table 3

Governance & Strategy Committee attendance

January – December 2025

Name	Jan 23	May 15	Oct 3	Dec 10	No. of eligible meetings	Total attended
John McDaid (Chair) [1]	•	•	–	–	2	2
Koulla Yiasouma	○	•	•	•	4	3
Martin Quigley (Chair) [2]	○	•	•	•	4	3
Úna Ní Dhubhghaill [3]	•	•	–	–	2	2
Emma Shanahan	•	○	•	○	4	2
David Byrne [4]	–	–	–	•	1	1

Notes
1. John McDaid's term ended on 30 June 2025
2. Martin Quigley appointed Chair on 1 July 2025
3. Úna Ní Dubhghaill's term ended on 15 September 2025
4. David Byrne's term commenced 15 September 2025

Table 4

Performance Committee attendance

January – December 2025

Name	Feb 20	Jun 12	Dec 15	No. of eligible meetings	Total attended
Koulla Yiasouma (Chair)	•	•	•	3	3
Brian Arnold	•	•	•	3	3
Bernadette Costello	•	•	•	3	3
Jennifer Gargan	–	–	•	1	1
John McDaid	•	○	–	2	1

Table 5

People & Culture Committee attendance

January – December 2025

Name	Feb 6	Apr 16	Jun 10	Nov 13	No. of eligible meetings	Total attended
Koulla Yiasouma (Chair)	•	•	•	•	4	4
William O'Rourke	•	•	•	○	4	3
Jennifer Gargan	•	•	•	•	4	4
Emma Shanahan	○	○	•	•	4	2
Dymphna Sherry	•	•	•	•	4	4

Legend:
- • Attended
- ○ Not Attended

Table 6

Sustainability Committee attendance

January – December 2025

Name	Feb 11	Sep 15	Dec 3	No. of eligible meetings	Total attended
Brian Arnold (Chair)	•	•	•	3	3
Fergal Reynolds	•	•	•	3	3
Dymphna Sherry	•	•	•	3	3

Table 7

Young People Committee attendance

January – December 2025

Name	Jan 29	Mar 6	Jun 24	Oct 22	Dec 9	No. of eligible meetings	Total attended
Jennifer Gargan (Chair)	•	•	•	•	•	5	5
Koulla Yiasouma	○	•	○	•	•	5	3
Liz O'Neill	•	•	○	○	•	5	3
Elizabeth Davey	○	•	•	•	•	5	4
Dymphna Sherry	•	•	•	•	•	5	5

Notes
Committee Members also met with young people on six occasions

Table 8

Board of Management meeting attendance totals

January – December 2024

Name	Board of Management Meetings attendance	Governance & Strategy Committee Meetings attendance	Audit & Risk Committee Meetings attendance	Young People Committee Meetings attendance	People & Culture Committee Meetings attendance	Sustainability Committee Meetings attendance	Performance Committee Meetings attendance	**Total Meetings Attended**
Koulla Yiasouma	10	3	4	3	4	–	3	**27**
Brian Arnold	10	–	–	–	–	3	3	**16**
David Byrne	2	1	–	–	–	–	–	**3**
Bernadette Costello	9	–	6	–	–	–	3	**18**
Elizabeth Davey	9	–	6	4	–	–	–	**19**
Jennifer Gargan	8	–	6	5	4	–	1	**24**
John McDaid	5	2	2	–	–	–	1	**10**
Úna Ní Dhubhghaill	7	2	–	–	–	–	–	**9**
Liz O'Neill	10	–	–	3	–	–	–	**13**
William O'Rourke	8	–	–	–	3	–	–	**11**
Martin Quigley	7	3	–	–	–	–	–	**10**
Fergal Reynolds	8	–	–	–	–	3	–	**11**
Emma Shanahan	7	2	–	–	2	–	–	**11**
Dymphna Sherry	10	–	–	5	4	3	–	**22**

Appendix 3

Table 1

Board Fees Paid in respect of January – December 2025

Name	Amount €
Brian Arnold	5,985.00
Bernadette Costello	5,985.00
Elizabeth Davey	5,985.00
Jennifer Gargan	5,985.00
John McDaid[1]	2,993.00
Dymphna Sherry	5,985.00
Koulla Yiasouma	8,978.00
Martin Quigley[2]	0.00

Notes
1. Term expired 30 June 2025
2. Fees waived

Table 2

Board members exempt from payment under OPOS*

Úna Ní Dhughghaill
Liz O'Neill
William O'Rourke
Fergal Reynolds
Emma Shanahan
David Byrne

Notes
* One person one salary

Appendix 4

What the 12 Campus Rules mean for our young people

1. CARE

- We take a child-centred approach to your care
- Your care plan is individual to you and your needs
- You will be included in decisions about you
- You will be supported to stay in touch with family and friends as appropriate.

2. EDUCATION & RECREATION

- You will have an educational and recreational plan that is individual to you
- We will offer you a range of education and training programmes and leisure activities
- You will be supported to be involved in decisions around your educational, training and leisure activities.

3. HEALTH

- Oberstown will provide for your physical and mental health needs (medical, dental, psychological, psychiatric and wellbeing)
- The Director is authorised to give consent for medical treatment to preserve your life and health
- 16+ year olds can give consent for medical treatment and assessment – but sometimes the Director will get legal advice if needed.

4. OFFENDING BEHAVIOUR

- You will have an offending behaviour plan that is individual to you and what you need
- At Oberstown you can access programmes and supports to prepare you for a life free of crime
- We use a restorative approach that helps build and maintain positive relationships and behaviour.

5. PREPARATION FOR LEAVING

- There will be a collaborative and child-centred approach to planning for your release or onward placement
- You and your parents/guardians will be asked contribute to decisions about your placement plan
- You will take part in regular placement planning meetings while you are in Oberstown.

6. SAFEGUARDING

- Young people will be protected from all forms of harm and abuse while in Oberstown
- You will meet with the Designated Liaison Person who will tell you how you can make a complaint if you feel you have been harmed
- All staff have a responsibility to report any concerns about harm or abuse to Tusla.

7. CONSULTATION & PARTICIPATION

- Your voice will be heard and you will have the opportunity to participate in decisions about you through placement planning, Student Council, Campus Council and Unit meetings
- You will have access to the Advocacy Officer who can support you to make a complaint about your care in Oberstown, or who will make the complaint for you.

8. POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

- We will support you to understand what behaviours are (un)acceptable to help you achieve better outcomes for yourself
- We will balance your rights and needs with that of the staff and Campus
- Oberstown will promote a culture and environment of zero violence.

9. RESTRICTIVE PRACTICES

- Restrictive practices (handcuffs, single separation, restraints, searches) will only be used in exceptional circumstances and for the shortest time possible
- Exceptional circumstances are when a young person's behaviour poses a risk to themselves, others or the Campus
- The use of restrictive practices must interfere as little as possible with the rights of young people
- Your rights include being treated with dignity and respect, having access to health and education, and being protected from harm.

10. STAFFING, MANAGEMENT & GOVERNANCE

- Oberstown will have the right number of qualified staff to care for you
- Oberstown will be open, honest and responsible in the way we deliver care to young people.

11. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- You will be cared for in an environment that is safe and secure and considers your physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing
- The Campus will be a place that can care for young people and provide a secure and safe environment for staff and young people
- CCTV surveillance and other security arrangements will be used as appropriate to keep young people safe and secure, protect them from harm or prevent an escape.

12. AUTHORITY TO SUSPEND THE RULES

- In situations that pose a serious threat to the safety and security of young people, staff and the Campus, the Director may suspend the Rules and associated procedures to deal with the emergency.

PURPOSE, VISION, VALUES

The Oberstown purpose, vision and values guide the Board, management and staff in their work.

Purpose

Oberstown Children Detention Campus provides care and education for young people referred by the courts on detention or remand orders, supporting them to address their offending and return successfully to society.

Vision

To provide young people with the highest standards of rights-based, child-centred care that meets their needs and enables them to maximise their potential.

Values

In Oberstown our values are:

1. We place young people at the heart of what we do.
2. We listen to young people, acknowledging their right to participate and influence decisions that affect them.
3. We act with integrity and are accountable for our actions.
4. We respect each other – our staff, young people and external partners – promoting honesty and authenticity.
5. We work in partnership to fulfil our shared vision.
6. We foster learning, encouraging new ideas and ways of working.

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The oberstown website, www.oberstown.com, provides extensive information on the campus and its work with young people, including:

- **Oberstown's purpose, Board and management**
- **Campus statistics**
- **Information resources including publications**
- **Visitor information**
- **Careers and job vacancies**
- **News & media resources**

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