

Submission to the PPO's call for evidence on Medomsley Detention Centre

Ben Jarman 

Birkbeck, University of London

Caroline Lanskey 

University of Cambridge Institute of Criminology

ABSTRACT This submission responds to the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman's call for evidence for Operation Deerness, its investigation into historic abuse allegations against detainees at Medomsley Detention Centre. Drawing on research conducted in 2016-17 for a project funded by HM Prison & Probation Service, which examined safeguarding in youth custody between 1960-2016, the document provides methodological guidance and substantive insights regarding historical institutional abuse. The submission addresses specific questions about oversight mechanisms, leadership structures, complaint systems, and abuse of power within detention centres. It offers detailed reflections on the challenges of using archival materials to investigate historical institutional abuse, including the limitations of documentary evidence and strategies for interpretation. The document includes comprehensive references to relevant archival sources at The National Archives and provides practical recommendations for accessing and analyzing these materials. Three annexes supplement the main text with additional research resources, including a historical timeline and details of relevant archival records.

Keywords: youth custody, medomsley, detention centres, historical criminology, child abuse, archival research

0.1 Availability

Available [here](#), pending publication by the PPO of submissions in response to its [call for evidence](#) relevant to its ongoing [special investigation](#).