

Secure Care in Scotland

About secure care in Scotland

Secure care in Scotland is the most containing and intense form of alternative care available, aimed at the very small number of children and young people whose situations and difficulties result in behaviours which pose such a high risk of significant harm to themselves and/or others, that for a particular period in their lives, they and/or others can only be kept safe through the young person's detention in the highly controlled setting of secure care. Children and young people can be placed in secure care through the Children's Hearings Scotland system (the CHS) or the Courts. Robust regulations and requirements are in place aimed at ensuring young people are only secured when and for as long as is absolutely necessary, and that they receive appropriate transition support during and following secure care. The guidance issued alongside the regulations in relation to the CHS and secure care states that:

"Depriving a child of their liberty infringes on one of their most fundamental human rights and impinges on associated rights to freedom of association and family life. For this reason any decision to place a child in secure accommodation can only be justified because it is in their best interests and/or because it will protect the rights of others"

Less than 1.5% of children and young people who are looked after and/or subject to child protection registration experience a period of secure care each year. However, though the numbers of children and young people secured are relatively small, the impact of being secured on each young person and their family is always considerable, and there are also implications for resources due to the highly intensive nature of secure care. Secure settings have a very high ratio of staff to young people, and the nature and location of the secure care centres means significant resources are required to maintain and facilitate contact with young people and their families, and meet regulatory and best practice expectations.

Young people in secure care are almost always those who have experienced childhood adversity and difficulties such as significant losses, abuse, neglect and trauma. The available evidence from profiles completed by the secure care centres, and from the Scottish Government's own Children's Social Work Statistics, indicates children and young people who are in secure care are among the most vulnerable in Scottish society.

The 32 Scottish Local Authorities are responsible for providing (i.e. delivering or purchasing) secure care services. Scottish Ministers are responsible for children under the age of 16 years and young people (aged under 18 years) who are on Compulsory Supervision Orders (CSOs) through the CHS, and are sentenced in court under solemn procedures and placed in secure care.

There are regulations in place which require that Ministerial approval is sought in relation to any establishment which intends to deliver secure care, and in relation to the appointment of the Head of Centre at each secure care service. There are currently five secure care centres registered in Scotland. Four of these are run by independent charitable organisations. They provide 78 placements. All of the secure care centres are registered, regulated and inspected as children's care and education services by the Care Inspectorate (currently residential school care accommodation - National Care Standard - Care Homes for Children and Young People) and Education Scotland. The standards against which secure care centres are registered will change with the implementation of new National Health and Social Care Standards in 2018.

Since December 2016, there have been 84 places in secure care in Scotland. The four independent charitable organisations each deliver a certain number of placements in line with the contract that has been negotiated with that centre by Scotland Excel, on behalf of the 32 Scottish Local Authorities:

- [Good Shepherd Centre \(Bishopton\): 18 places](#)
- [Kibble Education and Care Centre \(Paisley\): 18 places](#)
- [Rossie Young People's Trust \(Montrose\): 18 places](#)
- [St Mary's Kenmure \(Bishopbriggs\): 24 places](#)

The fifth centre is run by City of Edinburgh Council, which is not subject to contracting arrangements with Scotland Excel on behalf of the other 31 local authorities. Edinburgh closed one of its six place secure children's homes in November 2016, halving its secure provision from 12 to six.

Contact alison.gough@strath.ac.uk for more information or to discuss collaborative working opportunities.