



Staff in the Children's Centre

Patient Profile: Joyce was admitted to the Cassel with her new baby. Her two elder children had earlier been taken into care after repeated admissions to A&E suffering from huge overdoses of a dangerous domestic substance. Joyce was diagnosed as suffering from Munchausen's by proxy.

Joyce had a traumatic childhood and had been sexually abused by her uncle. With nursery support, intensive psychosocial nursing and psychotherapy, the children have remained with her so avoiding the financial and psychological costs of being taken into care. Joyce no longer needs to call for help through harming her child and she and her children are gradually rebuilding their lives.

seductive in their behaviour, posing major supervision and development problems for schools. For such children, the Cassel has provided a valuable place to work through some of their conflicts, and to begin to develop a sense of self-worth and confidence.

Dance movement therapy, swimming lessons and horse riding are provided along with clay, painting, craft work, and cookery sessions. While the education provision within the hospital settling can't possibly replicate outside schools, every attempt is made to ensure the National Curriculum is followed. Individual education programmes are planned for each child, usually in conjunction with the child's local school. Contact with local schools is maintained, increasing as the child's return to living in the community becomes a reality.

The Nursery

The Centre's nursery provides a safe stimulating and stable place to play for children under 5 years. Rules are few and children have freedom to explore, play and develop at their own pace.

The new nursery has specially designed play equipment including a climbing frame, rocking boat, balancing beams, rocking horse and slide. Arts and crafts are provided to develop fine motor skills, concentration and imagination.

Social skills are a priority with children learning to take turns, share and find out about each other. There is also a chance for them to talk about their worries, what makes them angry and what makes them laugh.

Therapeutic Work with Parents & Children

The Families Unit usually has a number of families with very young children. Sometimes families are admitted soon after the birth of a new baby, occasionally a mother will give birth to a new baby while already in treatment. Frequently our families have only one parent, often a young mother struggling to cope with the ongoing demands of a physically and emotionally demanding young family when her own childhood experience has been of deprivation and abuse.

Weekly mother and infant sessions with a child psychotherapist offer a space where the mother's anxieties can be heard, her depression and vulnerability noted, and difficulties in relating between her and her infant thought about. Older children receive individual therapy where they can explore their worries through play and talking, working through some of the painful experiences that have happened in their lives. This can help their behaviour and improve their relationship with their parents as they gain an understanding of how family difficulties have affected them.



Part of the original design for stained glass panels to be installed in the new Children's Centre's courtyard.

