

Cassel Services for Children

The Children's Centre

After many years housed in a prefabricated extension, the Cassel's new Children's Centre opens in September this year. With the help of many generous donors, we now have a purpose-built new building designed specifically to meet children's needs. The Centre is staffed by psychosocial nurses, a teacher, a nursery nurse and a child psychotherapist.

Because children in the Families Unit can range from a few days to 18 years old, a broad range of facilities is needed to match their requirements. In the new building there is a nursery, classrooms and a well equipped craft room with a potter's wheel and kiln. A central courtyard has a play and sitting area for small children with wind-chimes and musical sculptures. The glass walls surrounding have stained glass panels reflecting the changing seasons.

Families Treatment at the Cassel

The Cassel offers a unique approach to helping multi-problem families, combining the skilled help of nurses trained in psychosocial nursing and child and adult psychotherapists who offer individual and group psychotherapy. When families are admitted to the Cassel, it is often after months or years of difficulties. Inadequate parenting may have led to successive children being taken into care. In other cases one or other parents has a severe personality disorder or other mental illness. In-patient treatment tends to be considered when all other options in the community have failed.

If a child has been injured, courts often recommend hospital treatment as a last attempt at rehabilitation before they are permanently removed to adoption or long term fostering. Sometimes the children are in foster care and they are reunited



The newly completed Children's Centre due to be equipped and opened in September.

with their parents here within a safe, supportive environment for a renewed attempt at family life.

The therapeutic community is managed by patients and nurses together; it is in the experience of managing the ordinary tasks of daily living – meal-times, play and social activities – that families face their problems and develop their strengths.

Sometimes these attempts at rehabilitation fail. In these cases, great efforts are made to help the parents accept they cannot offer the children the care they need. If the parents can let the children know why they must let them go then it makes the children's chances of settling in a substitute family much more hopeful. Their well-being is the vital test that informs all our decisions about families' futures.

The School

Children's individual educational needs are always assessed before admission, and while for some it may be appropriate to look to the local schools (particularly older children aged 11-16+), the majority of children who come to the Cassel will spend a considerable period of time in the hospital setting.

Children who have been damaged either by the deliberate or "accidental" actions of a parent or other significant adult have all benefited from the nurturing experience of attending the school. Many may find it very difficult to use ordinary provisions or to trust any adults and respond appropriately to what is being said to them.

Children who have been sexually abused may have developed inappropriate ways of relating to adults and peers and can be very provocative or