

CLAYFIELDS HOUSE Secure Children's Home

Key points:

- **Working with vulnerable but high risk, high tariff young people with increasingly entrenched criminalised behaviours and complex social, emotional, special educational and mental health needs**
- **Despite the multiple complexity of needs, Clayfields reoffending rates around one -third lower than national rates**
- **This is achieved by; meticulous screening and assessment leading to targeted multi-disciplinary interventions that are evaluated, rigorous pursuit of appropriate provision for resettlement. There is high level investment in staff training, an all-pervading ethos driven by the principles of public protection by ensuring good security, but also, critically, through undertaking work to influence the activators of offending by building self-esteem, self-worth, educating to an outstanding standard and addressing health, mental health and emotional well-being problems, all of which help to reduce reoffending and build resilience when young people leave their care**
- **Paradoxically, what may seem an expensive resource of last resort has in effect become a positive option, reducing considerably the overall long term societal costs that are usually associated with long term entrenched criminal behaviour**

Clayfields is one of a small number of local authority managed Secure Children's Homes that exist as part of the secure estate. The unit is small (14 out of 18 places commissioned by Youth Justice Board) and staffing levels are higher than in STCs and YOIs. Critics argue that this is an expensive provision, with some arguing that larger scale Secure Training Centres or Youth Offending Institutions are a more cost effective way forward. It is true that the overall rates of young people entering the secure estate has dramatically fallen over the past decade. However, the staff at Clayfields have observed that those who are left tend to be highly criminalised, have complex and multiple high levels of need (special educational, social, emotional and in terms of mental health) and are blighted by what some call "socialised disability", others call "structural disadvantage" (a societal collision of gender, ethnicity, culture, postcode and other factors). Almost 100% of children at Clayfields House experience complex attachment difficulties and have had multiple traumatic episodes. Almost 100% of children at Clayfields House have special educational needs but the majority do not come in with an EHC Plan or with their needs accurately assessed.

Given the complexity of needs of the young people who are referred to Clayfields, and the positive longer term life outcomes that the multi-disciplinary staff team are able to engineer, the actual costs to society could well be dramatically reduced as a direct consequence of the quality of their work.

Clayfields was rated “outstanding” overall at their most recent Ofsted Inspection, Education provision has been outstanding for approximately 7 years to date.

Screening and assessment leading to personalised provision

The assessment of individual needs is the cornerstone of effective practice at Clayfields; health, mental health, education, care, substance abuse - a sophisticated battery of screens and assessment frameworks are deployed, with some processed common to all young people (such as CHAT- Comprehensive Health Assessment Tool), but others deployed pragmatically to probe and ascertain the degree of need (for example AIM 2 (assessment of adolescents who display sexually harmful behaviour), SAVRY (Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth), ADOS (Autism), ADHD and Global Mental health Assessment).

This rich source of data is then used to shape personalised provision. If high needs are identified, they are met through a combination of internal resources and the rigorous pursuit of additional provision for children in the centre and upon their return to the community (see below). The personalisation leads to Individual Learning Plans in education, with an accessible and appropriate curriculum built around the needs assessment rather than young people being made to “fit” an existing curriculum offer.

Multi-disciplinary integrated approaches are at the heart of practice at Clayfields, with CAMHS professionals engaged from the beginning in order to identify an underlying treatment and intervention hypothesis, subsequent goals for the young people and to agree the work to be done by the entire multi-disciplinary team during the child’s stay.

However, it is critically important to note that this is not something “done to” young people: young people are encouraged from the outset to be an active voice in all processes and procedures: their thoughts, views and opinions matter *and are valued*, and shape the direction of planning and interventions.

Individual Learning Plans in education and Care Plans are detailed and comprehensive. Assessment data is used formatively and regularly, to identify and celebrate “quick wins”, to consolidate and build on progress, wherever it happens, and to reshape intervention if something isn’t working.

Resettlement planning is comprehensive and detailed: a “Moving On Top Tips” pack is meticulously prepared for each young person. It celebrates their strengths, identifies needs in a supportive way, with short medium and long term hints tips and strategies. Support sometimes continues well after a young person leaves Clayfields, including the opportunity to return for last minute GCSE revision and sitting the examinations. The document always ends with a statement that sums up Clayfields’ ethos:

“Never be afraid to ring up for a chat to talk things through. We will not have all the answers but we will do our best to help in any way possible. Clayfields House 0115-917-0010”

Staff training and ethos – every interaction matters

It is recognised that the quality of relationship with every young person is at the heart of Clayfields effective practice. Every member of staff, including cleaners, site managers and general administrative assistance, not just the specialists, have a role in creating and sustaining a child-centred holistic provision. In that respect, the care staff as therapeutic parents are key drivers of change. It is the unwritten duty of *all* staff get to know each young person as an individual, creating a nurturing environment within a holistic approach, creating stability and trust and building positive respectful and productive relationships.

There is a high investment in staff training, covering a wide range of interconnected subjects such as attachment therapy, dialectical training (supporting those who are chronically suicidal or have borderline personality disorders), trauma/depression awareness and building resilience. Intensive staff and self-funded training is about to begin in Dyadic Developmental Practice to further develop staff as therapeutic parents due to the majority of residents having attachment and trauma issues.

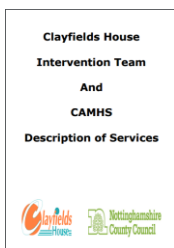
A personal observation

The leaders I met at Clayfields were passionate about their role, within the secure estate, within the youth justice system, within society, whose experience, knowledge and willingness to go the extra mile on behalf of vulnerable and damaged young people was inspirational.

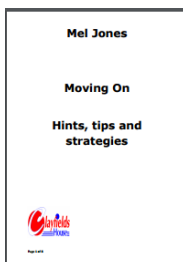
They work unbelievably hard to secure provision for the young people in their care. This is not always easy, given the complexities of funding and differing practice in Local Authorities around the country. “Nearly all of our young people have high level needs, needs that are rarely supported by an active EHCP,” said Linda Wright. “Securing resources (in a timely manner) to enable intervention work and specialist provision can be a battle of wills against local bureaucracy.” When it was suggested that, perhaps, a recommendation emerging from this project should be that Directors of Children’s Services Safeguarding Panels should have “CYPS in the youth justice system” as a standing item on safeguarding panels, she offered this story. “We had a person come into Clayfields from out-of-authority who had complex special needs but had never had them identified before, despite being in their late teens. I tried to secure provision through the conventional channels (LA SEND Team) but completely failed at first. They were unwilling to undertake an EHC assessment despite the presenting complex needs and unwilling to provide the equipment needed. They tried to apply the same procedures to us as they would to a secondary school, basically wanting to have the young person monitored for 2 terms before taking any other action. I had to escalate things using the YJB Annex A procedure because the young person’s needs were urgent, they needed the right provision both with us and in the community to avoid reoffending, they were on a very short sentence. Eventually after many phone calls and email conversations the matter was resolved and the young person got what they needed including an EHC assessment and associated provision. They even came back to Clayfields to do some revision and

undertake 3 GCSE exams this summer which resulted in 2 “Cs” and a “D” grade – not bad as they had completed their course work with us in under 6 weeks. They are now at college and “threatening” to reform themselves and not reoffend so they can come and work at Clayfields one day when they are older. What was clear was that the local authority did not know how vulnerable the young person in question was, nor were they tracking their vulnerable children and young people in custody in any meaningful way. If they had been there would clearly have been no arguments about meeting their needs, indeed they would have asked themselves important questions about why they weren’t addressed and met a lot earlier. I think there was learning for the local authority from this young person’s experience, this was certainly apparent in our increasingly positive and productive conversations with their staff at all levels and in the effective support they provided for the young person upon their release. “

Clayfields Brochure of Professional Services can be downloaded [HERE](#)



An anonymised version of Clayfields “Top Tips and Strategies” can be downloaded [HERE](#)



Contact Details

Linda Wright, Deputy Manager (Education & Professional Services),
Children, Families and Cultural Services
Nottinghamshire County Council
Clayfields House Secure Unit,
18-20 Moorbridge Lane, Stapleford,
Nottingham NG9 8GU
Tel: 0115-917-0010
Email: linda.wright@nottsc.gov.uk

