



Briefing Sheet Secure Welfare Coordination Unit

Contact Telephone: 01962 846432

Email: securewelfarecommissioning@hants.gcsx.gov.uk

**Address: Hampshire County Council, 4th Floor, Ell Court
North, Winchester. SO23 8UG**

The Secure Welfare Coordination Unit (SWCU) is a small unit grant funded by the Department for Education (DfE) for the purposes of administering placements and collecting data on secure welfare. It is not a legal entity and therefore does not have a Director. The SWCU provides a transparent, dedicated single point of contact for local authorities in England and Wales, to arrange secure welfare placements and streamline the process of finding the most suitable placement matching the individual needs of each young person needing secure care. The SWCU is committed to ensuring the best outcomes for all children needing secure placements. Data from the Secure Children's Homes is collected by the SWCU on a daily basis. Referrals are then sent to homes if a secure place is available. The home will then indicate whether they can accept the young person.

Neither the Secure Welfare Co-ordination unit, nor the Secretary of State has a direct role in the commissioning of secure places for individual young people on welfare grounds. It is for the local authority to come to a view as to the appropriate placement for an individual child, and for the person with management responsibility for the Secure Children's Home with available places to decide whether to take the child. Under The Children's Homes Regulations (England) Regulations 2015, (Regulation 14(2)(a)) – the registered person (i.e. the provider of the home) must ensure that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the homes statement of purpose. A secure home will therefore consider the existing cohort of young people in their care, their needs, the skills and ability of the staff to manage and meet their needs when considering any new application.

Individual local authorities should have their own placement policy based on the Department for Education's Care Planning Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010. There are currently 14 secure children's homes (SCHs) in England – 13 run directly by the local authorities in which they operate; one run by a charity. The SCHs take referrals from local authorities across the country seeking a secure placement under section 25 of the Children Act 1989, and also provide accommodation for some children who have been found guilty of crimes and given a custodial sentence. The final decision on making a welfare placement remains with the placing local authority and the manager of the receiving secure children's home.

While there is no absolute duty to provide secure accommodation in their area, there are general duties on local authorities to provide accommodation for looked-after children. In particular, section 22G of the Children Act 1989 imposes a duty on each local authority to take steps that ensure so far as reasonably practicable that they are able to provide accommodation in their area that meets the needs of children who are looked after by that local authority and fall within the section 22G(3) criteria. This is commonly known as the 'sufficiency duty'. In taking steps to secure that outcome the local authority must have regard to the benefit of having a number and range of accommodation providers that is, in their opinion, sufficient and capable of meeting different needs. Statutory guidance has been issued on securing sufficient accommodation for looked after children.

A major benefit of the unit is that detailed information from all the Secure Children's Homes in England and Wales, including each home's specialisms, and the young people placed in them will be held in one place. This has the advantage of ensuring that all options for a young person can be considered enabling informed decisions about the most appropriate placement for them. This much-needed data will prove invaluable in terms of learning what is working and where changes may be needed. We will also be building national profiles for England and Wales on the young people referred including complexities and needs.

The Secure Welfare Co-ordination Unit will maintain up to date availability information across all Secure Children's Homes providing secure welfare care. The centralized unit will also be able to gain a much clearer understanding of the volume, demand and need profile of young people needing secure welfare accommodation. The unit will collect data on all aspects of referrals for young people and the outcomes of those referrals, including where there have been challenges to making placements. This coordinated information will be shared with the sector for its strategic development and will ultimately support Ministers to make decisions on the future of the sector.

Hours of operation

Monday to Friday 8.30 – 5.00

Out of Hours arrangements

Monday to Friday the unit will update their voice mail facility with the volume of beds available at the end of the working day. The voice mail facility will provide the names of the secure children's homes with bed availability, the gender of the available beds and the contact details of the homes. The voice mail facility will also be updated highlighting if there are no available beds.

Vacancy Management

All secure children's homes in England and Wales with registered welfare beds will update the unit by 10am with their bed availability for that day. The data is collated on a daily basis, with the unit updating all local authorities with active referrals on the bed availability.

Referral Process

1. Referrals made to the unit can only be accepted on the SAN referral form, this can be attained via the SAN website or by contacting the unit who will send through a referral form.
2. Referrals need to be sent via a secure email address to the unit's GCSx email account at securewelfarecommissioning@hants.gcsx.gov.uk

3. A referral receipt will be sent back to the referring email. All referrals will be responded to within 30 minutes of receipt.
4. Following receipt of the referral, if further information is required or requires clarification, the Placement Officer will contact the referrer to discuss. Supporting documents will also be required at this stage to support the referral.
5. The Placement Officer will send all active referrals to all the SCH's with declared beds.
6. The referrer will be advised by the Placement Officer of potential offers and contact details.
7. The referrer should then make contact with the SCH to discuss the placement.
8. The SCH should inform the unit of the placement outcome.
9. The unit will close the referral at this stage.
10. Should a placement not be found by the unit the referral will remain active the following day. Possible release of YCS beds can be considered and if available, negotiation will be undertaken by the unit and the YCS.
11. If a placement is still not available, the responsibility for making appropriate accommodation arrangements for the young person remains with the responsible authority for the child.

Governance Arrangements

Oversight and development of the unit is undertaken by the Welfare Placements Project Board. The members of the Board are:

Alison Sykes Head of Secure & Emergency Services, Vinney Green SCH (Chair)

Thirza Smith Deputy Service Manager Adel Beck SCH

Amber James Interim Head of County Services HCC

Helen Gunniss Team Manager Secure Welfare Coordination Unit HCC

Marie Higgins Service Manager St Catherine's SCH

Darren Beattie Service Manager Atkinson SCH

Callum Worsnop Markets and Commissioning DfE

Juliane Wesemann Children in Care & Permanence Division DfE

Sue Sylvester NHSE

Mel Meggs Rotherham Council – ADCS Rep

Lauren Brothwood Deputy Placement Team Manager YCS

Lynn Knowles Head of Children's Residential Homes, Hertfordshire