Durham County Council is one of only five local authorities in the country who have received an outstanding overall for safeguarding services and we have been graded as good overall for our looked after children's services with our capacity to improve judged as outstanding.

Aycliffe Secure Centre is Durham County Council’s Secure Children’s Home based in the North-East of England. We have a brand new purpose designed building which opened in August 2011.

The Howard League recently took a debate to the House of Lords arguing that Secure Children’s Homes should be the only form of secure accommodation for children. Secure units are children’s homes, they are not prisons. They should be viewed as a positive option for some young people, not a last resort. Secure environments are here to keep children safe.

Our Centre houses some of the most vulnerable young people, many of whom have complex problems and need intensive support to help them turn their lives around. Secure care can play a critical role in a young person’s rehabilitation, and interventions can form part of a planned form of care rather than in response to a crisis. We have direct input from National Forensic Adolescent Mental Health Services.

“Outstanding Children’s Services in County Durham”

Durham County Council is one of only five local authorities in the country who have received an outstanding overall for safeguarding services and we have been graded as good overall for our looked after children’s services with our capacity to improve judged as outstanding.

Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children’s Services
Final Report September 2012
We have a brand new purpose designed building in which we provide high quality, specialist secure accommodation for up to 42 young people between the ages of 11 and 17. We provide exceptionally high quality individual care ensuring all aspects of the young people's needs are addressed. We provide the best possible care, education, health services and interventions to help young people to reach a point in their lives when they can successfully return to their families or enter independent living.

There are six homes within our centre. Four of these homes have eight places: “Lumley” and “Barnard” are more nurturing homes for young people, and “Auckland” and “Walworth” look after young people who require a more structured environment. Our fifth home “Durham” can look after up to six young people with more complex needs and it has a medical and dental facility attached. The sixth home is our step down home where young people who are ready to move back into the community can be offered special support to prepare them for the transition.

We accept referrals for young people who satisfy the “welfare” criteria specified within Section 25 of the Children Act 1989 and who are in need of care, programmes of intervention and protection. We provide young people with support tailored to their individual needs and are particularly unique in our partnership with National Forensic Adolescent Mental Health Services. We offer a high ratio of staff to young people and deliver consistently superior outcomes for children and young people, ensuring value for money.

We give the young people in our care a comprehensive health screening and treatment service. We have a GP surgery, dental facilities and optical facilities on-site. All young people have a comprehensive health assessment within 24 hours of admission to ensure all their needs are met while here and that they have a discharge pathway.

We have a contract with Northern Mental Health Adolescent Forensic Services, Newcastle. Our nursing team works alongside the Kolvin Clinic to identify any emotional or mental health issues. Young people are given mental health screening by forensic psychiatric nurses as soon as possible after admission. We also have a counselling and clinical psychologist on-site for 1:1 consultations and assessments.

Our Interventions Programme is an important part of our work with young people at Aycliffe. All of our programmes are accredited and staff have been trained to deliver OINTOC (Offending Is Not The Only Choice) and VINTOC (Violence Is Not The Only Choice). We provide pre and post treatment intervention psychometric measures on strengths and difficulties, social problem solving, emotional intelligence and anger and aggression. We have an inreach substance misuse service that delivers a range of targeted, specialist and universal interventions up to Tier 4. We have a long history of working with young people who sexually harm and who have been sexually exploited. Monthly multi-disciplinary meetings are chaired by consultant psychiatrists to ensure our young peoples’ plans are on track.

“I would like to say that being at Aycliffe really boosted my confidence and I have learned a lot from being there. I am glad I had the chance to meet the people that I did there and I am really grateful to the staff for helping me to control my anger and for supporting me.”

NJ, a young person

“I like Aycliffe because young people who come to Aycliffe feel that they’re part of a big family, when sometimes they have not had a good experience with family in their own lives.”

J, a young person