

Christmas in Secure Care – guest blog from young people at Good Shepherd Centre, Bishopton

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We are so excited for our Christmas Party. The games hall has been transformed. 🎄👤 pic.twitter.com/UCCPlpA6W4

– Good Shepherd Centre (@GSCBishopton) [December 19, 2019](#)

The festive season is such a happy time of year, where families and friends enjoy spending time together. However, for some it can also be one of the most difficult times. This is especially true for young people living in secure care. The reality for most of the young people living at the Good Shepherd Centre is that they do not get to spend Christmas day with their families. The majority of the young people living with us have had to deal with huge challenges and have faced trauma in their lives, so for some Christmas time itself may hold unhappy memories.

We asked all our young people what their Christmas wish would be and almost everyone said, 'to be at home for Christmas'. Blake* said he loves and misses his Gran's cooking at Christmas including the sprouts! So, here at the Good Shepherd Centre it's important that every year we really work hard together to offer festive events and experiences which children and young people can enjoy, just like many other families do.



This year, the staff team who support young people across our care houses, Education and support departments, has been blown away by the kindness, talent and effort that young people have shown during the preparations.

In the Media class students designed their own digital Christmas cards. They did a fantastic job and the results are really professional. Young people and staff also worked together to choose and plan the decorations in the care houses which all look very Festive.



Digital Christmas cards created by residents of Good Shepherd, Bishopton

We also got involved in one of the newest traditions 'Elf on the Shelf'. We had a naughty elf in the Home Economics class, he tried to 'tap dance' but he kept falling in the sink!



Young people were really keen to support *Save the Children* and took part in the annual Christmas Jumper Day, which was an opportunity to be silly and raise money for charity at the same time.



Staff of Good Shepherd Bishopton show off their Christmas jumpers

We have a really good relationship with Erskine Care Home for Veterans. We invited them to our Big Soup Share in October, which involved young people choosing recipes and making 3 different soups to serve to our guests from Erskine, made from vegetables grown in our garden. It was such a success, the young people loved hearing the stories as much as the older guests loved telling them their stories. Two young people wanted to invite Erskine guests back for Christmas and came up with the idea of staging a Vintage Christmas Party.



Residents of Good Shepherd had the idea of hosting a Vintage Christmas for residents of Erskine Care Home for Veterans

Goodies were baked and setting the table and decorating the room was an opportunity to get creative and festive. We also created a choir; they rehearsed before and after school for two weeks solid. Their hard work and dedication paid off as the veterans thoroughly enjoyed the singing and the intergenerational respect and affection was lovely to see. In fact, our 'Vintage Christmas' was such a huge success that it may now become an annual event in the GSC calendar.



Getting Ready for the 'Vintage Christmas celebrations



The hall all set up to welcome the Veterans for their Vintage Christmas

Our Christmas Party is such a fantastic day, it is a worthy event to end the year. This year the celebration involved 140 guests including young people living here, their important people, professionals and partners involved in the work that we do at Good Shepherd Centre.

The staff all work tirelessly to make sure the day is as magical as it can be for the young people. Getting dressed up for the Christmas party is an event in itself, some young people had been planning their outfits for weeks. Maisie* bought her outfit online and looked fabulous, as did everyone.

The games hall is transformed into a dining area filled with Christmas lights, a fireplace for Santa and his Elf to give out presents to the young children and of course a Real Christmas Tree. We watched a film showcasing all our highlights of 2019. We had an awards ceremony celebrating all our achievements and of course we had our Christmas dinner with all the trimmings served by our staff!

Insert picture named 'hall transformed'

As our guests arrived they were treated to Christmas songs sung by the choir from St Fillan's primary school.





***not young people's real names**

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[Vulnerable Witnesses Act to come into force in January](#)

Justice Secretary Humza Yousaf and Lady Dorrian, Lord Justice Clerk today officially opened the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service's new Glasgow Evidence and Hearings Suite.

It provides facilities to let child witnesses pre-record their evidence and for vulnerable witnesses to give evidence remotely away from the formality of a court room. The suite also provides hearing rooms for the Additional Support Needs Tribunal.

Speaking at the launch, Mr Yousaf confirmed that the Commencement Regulations for the [Vulnerable Witnesses \(Criminal Evidence\) \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#) has been laid in Parliament and will come into effect on 20 January 2020.

He said:

"Today we have laid the regulations to ensure that any child witness under the age of 18 giving evidence in the most serious cases will be allowed to

have it pre-recorded, sparing them the trauma of giving evidence during a trial. This first phase of implementing the new pre-recording rule will cover certain cases in the High Court.

“As these reforms will affect live cases it is necessary to make transitional arrangements so the new rule will apply to cases where the accused first appears on petition on or after 20 January 2020. We plan to ensure that these reforms are evaluated at each stage of the roll out to ensure the smooth implementation in practice of such important changes in how these vulnerable children will give their evidence.

“I have said previously that legislative reform is only a small part of the work that is needed to ensure that there is much greater use of pre-recording within the justice system.

“The other part of that jigsaw is why we are here today – by beginning the process on delivering sufficient and modern facilities and reliable pre-recording technology. We were delighted to be able to provide funding of almost one million pounds to assist in the development of this progressive and modern venue.

“It is absolutely imperative that we continue to deliver on our promises, and on the Scottish Government’s vision to continually look at improving how child and vulnerable witnesses participate in our criminal justice system.”

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[Prison Officers Association \(Scotland\) conference](#)

Justice Secretary Humza Yousaf has thanked prison staff for their commitment and highlighted the recent “well-deserved” Scottish Prison Service pay agreement.

Mr Yousaf has been addressing members of the Prison Officers Association (Scotland) at the union’s annual conference in Peebles today and took questions from prison officers as part of a panel session.

Dedicated prison officers and staff

Speaking ahead of the event, Mr Yousaf reflected on the dedication of prison

officers and staff who work hard to manage and support the rehabilitation of those in their care. He hailed the recent pay deal, which amounts to an increase of up to 15% over three years for the lowest paid officers.

He said:

“While crime has fallen considerably in the last decade, the nature of the offending being prosecuted in Scotland’s courts has also changed. We have seen, for example, a greater focus on serious organised crime and sexual offending, including historical cases and those committed online, as well as longer sentences being imposed.

“The result has been an unprecedented growth in the number of people in prison – many of whom have complex needs – and this presents daily challenges for frontline staff.

“Despite these pressures, Scotland’s prisons are stable, safe and well run. That is to the credit of the prison officers and staff across the country and I am very grateful for their unwavering dedication and commitment.

Pay agreement

Mr Yousaf continued: “The Scottish Prison Service (SPS) pay agreement for 2019-2022 reflects the important contribution made by all staff in our prisons. It rightly sees the lowest paid staff in our prisons receive a pay increase of up to 6% in its first year and up to 15% over three years. This is a well-deserved increase and compares very well with the equivalent in England and Wales.

“We are working closely with the SPS to manage the rising population. We have already made additional financial provision available to help meet cost pressures and we will keep the budget position under review.

“At the same time, we must build on the consensus around our evidence-based approach to penal policy and preventing reoffending – continuing to work constructively to respond to the growth in prisoner numbers and maintain recent reductions in the reconviction rate to a 20-year low.

“I welcome the opportunity to hear directly from members of the POA(S) about their experiences.”

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