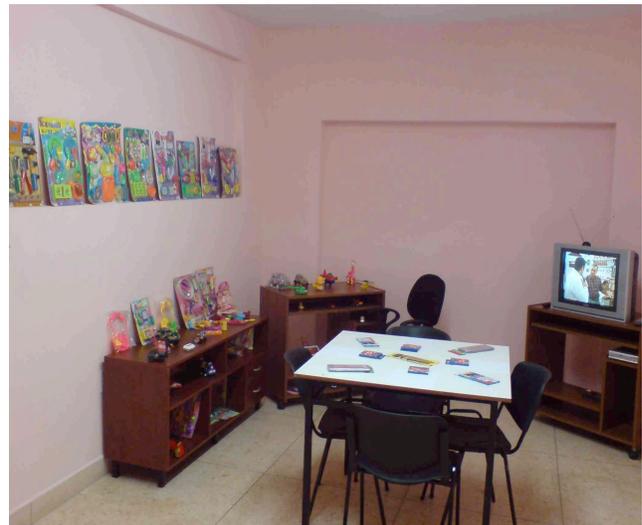


Santiago De Cuba Centre For the Protection of Boys, Girls and Adolescents



The centre is based in a converted house with a garden in a residential area of Santiago de Cuba. A house is a more friendly and familiar place for a traumatised child than a police station or other official building.

After coming through the main front entrance, there is a playroom where the child can relax and play while the staff talk to the parents or carer to explain the function of the centre and the procedures. The mother will be offered on going support for her child and family if that is required. The pet dog is also a favourite with the children.



Snr. Nélda González Pelier, the Director of the centre is a professional psychologist specialising in children. Her office is located in the front of the building.



The welfare of the parents and child and any other brothers or sisters that have to come with the child victim to the centre are always a priority and as part of this support there is a small cafeteria to provide meals, snacks and drinks. The room overlooks the garden where children can play. There is also a toilet and shower room for the children.



A view of the garden, showing the balcony, the interview room is located in the top left hand corner of the photograph on the first floor.



Great care has been taken in the design and refurbishment of the house, and particularly the interview room, to create an environment to reassure the child and facilitate the highest possible audio and video quality



of the recordings. The windows have two double glazed units separated by 10 cm. to reduce noise penetration from outside. Acoustic tiles have been installed in a suspended ceiling and curtains fitted on two walls.

The video recording equipment was installed in this room next to the interview room. The equipment is identical to that used in child protection units in the UK. There are also ample storage facilities to ensure the security of the recordings. A member of the Centre's staff with experience of electronics has been trained by the engineer from Serco, the UK company that installed the video recording equipment. He has the responsibility for the maintenance of the equipment and the administration of the recording, for example, booking them in and out of the Centre when they are required in court proceedings.



Although the Ministry of the Interior lead the investigation into allegation of child sexual abuse, there is a very strong culture of inter-agency collaboration working with the child and the whole family. This approach has been included in the design of the Centre with the permanent staff of psychologists and social workers. However, there are also other professionals involved in these cases, such as forensic doctors and prosecutors. They are invited to be involved throughout the case and they can attend the Centre to participate in the planning of the interview and monitoring the interview through a live audio and video link as it takes place from the observation room. The interviewing officer has an earpiece and the equipment operator can speak to him or her during the interview to ask for additional questions to be put to the child





In March 2008, Sergeant Nick Quine, who is fluent in Spanish and a child protection specialist and trainer from the Avon and Somerset Constabulary, gave a two-week training course for 12 experienced police officers. The course combined theory with practical role-playing exercises using the video interview room. Two investigators trained in Havana in September 2004. The Director of the Havana Child Protection Centre, attended the training course to assist Nick Quine.



At the end of the fortnight training course, the Child Protection Centre had its official opening by the Vice President of the Provincial Government of Santiago De Cuba and the Deputy British Ambassador, Caitlin Jones. Local children participated in the opening ceremony with songs and poetry.

March 2008