

# Revamp for place of safety

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THE LERATO Place of Safety, that cares for vulnerable, orphaned and children displaying behavioural problems, will undergo a R13,2 million revamp.

The children will be accommodated at secure facilities for the duration of the upgrading.

For many years, the children have had to do without lights, wash in cold water and tolerate a bad sewage smell that permeates the building.

One of the gushing taps in the children's living area, that has been bound with wire, cannot close and results in a massive waste of water.

Due to challenges in finding alternative and suitable accommodation for the children, the Department of Social Development has not been able to commence with repair work at the place of safety until now.

The MEC for Social Development, Gift van Staden, yesterday said a 16-month contract was signed with local contractor, Alpha Industrial Services, following a transparent bidding process.

He said the centre, which opened its doors in 1991, currently cares for 29 boys and girls between the ages of nine and 17 years.

"This is largely due to the department's reunification service



**UPGRADE:** The living area at the Lerato Place of Safety which forms part of the renovations which will be start soon.

Picture: **Soraya Crowie**

where the children are reunited with their families after extensive programmes with social workers and once we have satisfied ourselves that they are safe to return home."

He stated that the drainage system was old and presents daily challenges that were placing both staff and children at risk.

"Over the past 28 years the institution has been a safe haven for

thousands of children across the Province and this has taken its toll on the infrastructure.

"The toilet system is constantly blocked and there are times when the toilets are out of order."

Van Staden said the contractor would be commissioned to repair the sewerage system and drains.

"Children have taken out their anger and frustration on the building when things did not go their

way and in the process extensive damage was caused to the ceilings, floors, doors, windows, water pipes and electricity fittings."

He added that due to malfunctioning geysers children had to wash with cold water during winter.

"The drainage and water supply problems were at times out of our control and were as a result of bulk infrastructure challenges."

Van Staden said the site would be monitored on a regular basis to check on progress.

"The contract includes, amongst other work, improving the dormitories and bathrooms, the living area of the children and the offices of child and youth care workers.

"The Department of Social Development, with the support of the Department of Public Works, will ensure that the contractor sticks to the agreed timeline and that work of outstanding quality be delivered. Penalties will be instituted if there are any delays."

He stated that local labour would be employed during the project where workers would be able to use their skills once they have left the site.

"Social workers and caregivers will move with the children while staff will continue at the laundry and kitchen at the centre. No staff member will be without employment during this time."