

To: HOUSING AND SOCIAL WORK SERVICES COMMITTEE		Subject: DEVELOPMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR FAMILIES.
From: HEAD OF SOCIAL WORK SERVICES/CHIEF SOCIAL WORK OFFICER		
Date: 20 AUGUST 2008	Ref: ST/HH	

**1. Purpose of Report**

To advise committee of proposals to develop services for children with disabilities and their families, and to seek approval to enter into a tendering process to identify new support providers in North Lanarkshire.

**2. Background**

- 2.1. A significant number of research studies confirms that families which support a child with additional support needs due to disability tend to experience greater stress, isolation, poverty and ill health due to the pressures of caring.
- 2.2. An audit of children and family social work services was undertaken in 2005/2006 which highlighted strengths, areas for improvement and areas for development. Services for children with disabilities and their families were noted to be limited in North Lanarkshire and in need of additional funding investment.
- 2.3. A consultation event with the parents of children with disabilities in North Lanarkshire facilitated by Partners in Play (a parent led organisation providing inclusive opportunities for children) confirmed that families were experiencing additional stress and were in need of flexible, supportive and child centred support services.
- 2.4. A corporate growth bid was submitted, and was successful in identifying an additional £500,000 funding for 2008/2009. This is a positive development which will enable new services to start to be put into place.

**3. Proposals / Considerations**

- 3.1. A planning group has been established to ensure a partnership approach to these new developments. The group is tasked with developing specifications for new support providers based on our vision for children in North Lanarkshire.
- 3.2. The group includes parents, social work staff, other council staff and representation from partner agencies.

- 3.3 Our vision for all children is that they are provided with opportunities which maximise their individual development and potential, while ensuring that they are supported to be included, safe and healthy. For children with disabilities this means accessing mainstream services and opportunities. At times this means challenging attitudes, approaches and practices which form barriers to inclusive play, learning and achievement opportunities. It also means that each child needs to be encouraged and supported in a highly individualised way, ensuring that they get the right support at the right times. Support services therefore require to be child centred and provided flexibly, creatively and sensitively.
- 3.4 The main provider of support services to the families of children with disabilities is Partners in Play (PIP). This has developed incrementally due to the significant levels of unmet need in North Lanarkshire. PIP was originally developed as an inclusion organisation, with a focus on assisting parents to gain access to mainstream services through awareness raising and education. PIP is funded through a "cocktail" of funding sources with several initiatives being funded on a year to year basis.
- 3.5 The discussion about the development of new services in North Lanarkshire has been welcomed by the management committee of PIP, which has since formally advised of their intention to revert to being an inclusion organisation, an area which requires significant development in maximising opportunities for children with disabilities. In revising the aim and objectives of PIP, the service requires to be core funded as part of this overall development plan.
- 3.6 The planning group has identified a plan of work to commission new support providers via a tendering process. This is required due to the geography of North Lanarkshire, and the significant unmet need in the northern area. This decision has also been informed by the development of adult services for people with disabilities. It is estimated that this work will take place between September 2008 and January 2009. A creative approach is being adopted in tendering for these new services with the active involvement of parents and partner agencies in both a tendering DVD and in the decision making panel.
- 3.7 A transition plan will be required as the new support providers require time to both develop and implement their services in North Lanarkshire, and families need to develop confidence in these services. Consequently, PIP will continue to provide support services during 2008 and into 2009 to enable this transition plan to be implemented.

#### **4. Financial / Personnel / Legal / Policy Implications**

- 4.1. These proposed developments are consistent with national and local policies.
- 4.2. Work is currently underway to develop a specification and contract with PIP. It is estimated that the costs of the newly designed service provided by PIP will be in the region of £200,000. Work is also underway to develop a specification for the new support providers, with services being funded from the growth monies. In the interim a range of existing support will continue to ensure expenditure of the new allocation of funding in 2008/2009 during the transition arrangements for Partners in Play and the new support providers.

## 5. Recommendation

It is recommended that Committee:

- (i) approve the proposal to develop PIP as an inclusion service, with core costs set out within a contractual framework, as set out at sections 3.5 and 4.2.
- (ii) approve the proposed plan to develop two new support providers in North Lanarkshire via a tendering process, as set out at section 3.6 and 4.3.
- (iii) request that the Executive Director of Housing and Social Work submit a further report in respect of the outcome of the tendering process and;
- (iv) otherwise note the contents of this report.



**Mary Fegan**  
**Head of Social Work Services/**  
**Chief Social Work Officer**  
**22 July 2008**

For further information on this report please contact Susan Taylor, Manager (Children & Families) on telephone 01698 332032.