

To: HOUSING AND SOCIAL WORK SERVICES COMMITTEE		SUBJECT: HIGHER ASPIRATIONS, BRIGHTER FUTURES: NATIONAL RESIDENTIAL CHILD CARE INITIATIVE (NRCCI) REPORT IMPLICATIONS
From: HEAD OF SOCIAL WORK SERVICES/ CHIEF SOCIAL WORK OFFICER		
Date: 5 AUGUST 2010	Ref: JI/MF	

1. Purpose of Report / Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the key points and implications for North Lanarkshire Council from the recent National Residential Child Care Initiative (NRCCI) report – Higher Aspirations, Brighter Futures.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care was commissioned by the Scottish Government to lead the National Residential Child Care Initiative to undertake a strategic review of residential childcare services and make sector driven recommendations to the Scottish Government, local government and providers of residential child care. The initiative has reported back to Adam Ingram, Minister for Children and Early Years with a number of recommendations which have been accepted by the Scottish Government and COSLA. The report is the most significant report on residential child care services since the Skinner Report 'Another Kind of Home' in 1992.
- 2.2 The NRCCI has aimed to provide a blueprint for the future development of residential child care services to ensure the needs of children and young people are met. Three working groups comprised of members from a range of agencies focused on:
- Matching Resources and Needs
 - Commissioning
 - Workforce
- 2.3 North Lanarkshire currently operates 5 children's houses, 4 of which have recently been built to extremely high specification and standards. Currently 30 children live in the 5 houses. In addition North Lanarkshire has 9 children living in residential schools, 3 in secure units and a further 5 in residential schools for children with disabilities (at the time of writing).
- 2.4 In North Lanarkshire 79 staff are employed across the children's houses. 53 are fully qualified and registered, 26 are working towards HNC and SVQ in order to meet registration requirements.

3. Proposals / Considerations

- 3.1 The report focussed on the experience of an increasing number of children and young people with complex and multiple needs being placed in residential care and recognised the need for this to be seen as a placement of choice.
- 3.2 With the emphasis on strategic planning to meet future needs, including the need for specialist placements, one of the recommendations focuses on the importance of commissioning and joint commissioning. A national commissioning group has been established whose initial focus will be secure care provision.

- 3.3 The report calls for a specific national review of provision for children with disabilities and also recognises the vulnerability for young people associated with issues of transition and leaving care.
- 3.4 A key recommendation concerns the status, training, education, skills and competence of the residential child care workforce. The quality and qualifications of the staff within the residential unit are seen as crucial and it is recommended that care staff, from 2014, achieve degree level qualifications as this is seen as commensurate with the responsibility they hold and the skills and knowledge needed. This will be the subject of further consultation with the Scottish Social Services Council.
- 3.5 Further key points are made in relation to the importance of using the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach to care planning, ensuring that health needs of children are given priority, the active participation of young people in their care arrangements, the use of evidence-based interventions and the safe recruitment of staff.

4. Financial / Personnel / Legal / Policy / Equalities Implications

- 4.1 There are financial implications regarding the recruitment and training needs of a workforce to degree level. While recognising the importance of having professionally trained staff there are many staff who are excellent carers and able to achieve National Qualifications. (HNC / SVQ) The timescales of 2014 would appear to be very challenging particularly given the current financial climate.
- 4.2 There would be significant financial and personnel implications for North Lanarkshire if there was a move to degree-qualified staff within the short time-scale proposed.

5. Recommendations

Committee is asked to:

- (1) welcome Higher Aspirations, Brighter Futures as an ambitious report which sets out to improve the quality and provision of residential accommodation to children and young people in Scotland; and
- (ii) seek to ensure that recommendations should be taken into consideration in strategic planning and development of services.



Mary Fegan
Head of Social Work Services /
Chief Social Work Officer
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For further information about this report, or to obtain a copy of the report, please contact Sheila Gordon, Service Manager, Children and Families. tel: 01698 332723