

Scottish Children's Reporter Administration

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Mr Andrew Cowe
Chief Executive
North Lanarkshire Council
PO Box 14
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20 July 1995

Dear Mr Cowe

REPORTER SERVICE STRUCTURE

I am pleased to attach a consultation paper on the future structure of the Reporter Service.

Our aim is to establish a structure which will assist the Service to achieve both consistent attainment of high national standards in practice, and scope for local initiative and creativity. We are particularly keen to ensure that inter-agency work can be sustained and indeed strengthened.

I would be most interested to have a note of your views on the consultation paper. If possible they should be in my hands by **Friday 18 August**.

Yours sincerely



Alan Miller
Principal Reporter

Enc



REPORTER SERVICE STRUCTURE

CONSULTATION PAPER

Prepared by: Alan D Miller, Principal Reporter

Date: 20 July 1995

1. Introduction

1.1 The Reporter Service is currently provided by Scotland's 12 Regional and Island authorities, with departments ranging in size from one Reporter to 60, together with support staff. Of the total staff complement of about 135 Reporters and 145 support and administrative staff, between 80 and 85% work wholly or mainly in first line casework, mostly based in area patch teams. Staff are located in 33 offices throughout the country, most of which also serve as Children's Hearing Centres. In most areas, Hearings are also held in a number of other locations.

1.2 As might be expected, the existing structure is both inconsistent and fragmented in relation to,

- ◆ deployment of staff
- ◆ pay scales
- ◆ various other conditions of service
- ◆ internal structures

1.3 It is worth noting at this stage the background work already carried out in relation to Service structure. The SWSG Planning Team envisaged a 3-tier structure, with the first tier based on new local authority boundaries. Internal management structures for larger authorities were not elaborated. The middle tier was based in number but not in boundaries on sheriffdoms. Reporters have also shown considerable interest in structural issues, again tending to favour a 3-tier model albeit with some questions about the design of the middle tier unanswered.

1.4 This paper seeks to identify the principles, responsibilities and functions which should be recognised in designing a national structure for the Reporter Service (section 2 below). It then goes on to examine the strengths and weaknesses of 3 possible structural models, leading to a recommendation to adopt the 3-tier model outlined in section 5, in principle at least.

1.5 Finally, the paper raises questions for further consideration and consultation.

2. *Design Issues*

2.1 While debate amongst Reporters has not yet produced one clear structural model, it has identified a number of widely agreed principles which will require to be taken into account:

- ◆ **casework delegation** - the vast majority of cases are, and should be progressed entirely at local level within the framework of regional/national policy and guidance. As long as adequate support and advice systems are available, there is good reason not to follow the example of, for instance, the Procurator Fiscal Service, who are required to refer every case above a certain level of seriousness (no matter how straightforward or complex) to the Crown Office for determination.
- ◆ **strong local presence** - despite the small numbers of staff involved, the Service has become increasingly decentralised over recent years, because of the very clear need for accessibility by and to the local community and its resources.
- ◆ **alignment of boundaries** - inter-agency work is not an add-on extra for Reporters; it is of the essence of the job. It is not possible to sustain an effective professional service without frequent and many layered contact with the Children's Panel, Children's Panel Advisory Committee, Social Work and Education Services, the Police, the Procurator Fiscal and court services and health agencies. The most critical relationships are with the Children's Panel, the Social Work Department and the Police; of these, the first 2 and to some extent the last also will follow the new local authority boundaries.
- ◆ **management effectiveness** - the Service's management structure must be viable, ie able to deliver on key management responsibilities, without being top heavy or unnecessarily bureaucratic. Such in-house specialist supports as are deemed necessary should be reasonably available throughout the country.
- ◆ **minimal disruption** - both Reporters and support staff throughout the country have acquired considerable local knowledge and experience. While a certain level of transitional change is necessary and perhaps even desirable, the extent of the potential loss should be considered in looking at the Service structure. Any structure should leave the vast majority of area team-level posts exactly where they are just now.
- ◆ **culture change** - individual Reporter's Departments have very different management structures and cultures, with varying strengths. Whereas the last point above perhaps indicates a need for greater stability at ground level, this point may indicate a need for greater innovation in management structures.

2.2 Secondly, it is necessary to consider the management functions to be delivered in the field. As would be expected, these largely reflect the application of responsibilities already identified in designing the provisional staffing structure for the Administration Headquarters:

- ◆ **practice management**, including implementation of guidance, provision of advice and development of practice specialisms
- ◆ **performance management**, including the implementation of performance management and practice audit systems
- ◆ **staff development**, including development and implementation of local training plans and implementation of supervision and appraisal systems
- ◆ **organisational development**, including maintaining communication links and making local contributions to national developments
- ◆ **personnel management**, including recruitment, deployment, discipline and employee relations
- ◆ **budget management**, including constructing and managing the local budget and implementing control systems
- ◆ **information systems management**, including managing implementations, monitoring effectiveness and managing support systems
- ◆ **estates management**, including security, cost management, maintenance and development
- ◆ **contract management**, ie securing the value for money provision of supplies and services
- ◆ **external interfaces**, including the management of inter-agency and public relations work.

A number of these management functions could themselves be subdivided between different levels, if necessary.

2.3 Just as specialist professional and administrative supports (eg Personnel, IT) have been built into the proposed HQ structure, so it is important to reflect these in the field and to ensure their ready availability to staff throughout the country. This is an area in which the Service is currently weak. In fact, much strength in depth can be built in at little or no additional cost by drawing out the abilities of existing staff with potential in these matters:

- ◆ **professional supports** - these might include case assessment, child abuse and neglect, advocacy and child witnesses
- ◆ **para professional supports** - a small number of precognition officers could provide very considerable added value for the Service by supporting professional staff involved in the increasing number of lengthy and complex proof hearings before the sheriff

- ◆ **administrative supports** - Coopers & Lybrand proposed the development of some administrative/clerical staff throughout the country as IS liaison officers. There is also a need for some local expertise to be developed in relation to budgetary, personnel and contract management responsibility.

3. *Structure 1 - Authorities and Headquarters*

3.1 The first structural model is a simple 2-tier model, with no intermediate levels intervening between Headquarters on the one hand and up to 32 local authority-based units on the other. (In practice the actual number of such units would probably be about 28-30; in the case of certain very small authorities such as East Renfrewshire, Clackmannan and East Lothian, a Service could be provided on a conjoint basis with that for a neighbouring authority.)

3.2 The potential advantages of this model are:

- ◆ an enhanced role for the Authority Reporter post
- ◆ shorter lines of communication
- ◆ greater scope for flexibility in the establishment of pay and grading structures
- ◆ a clear focus for inter-agency relationships at local authority level.

3.3 There are, however, very significant foreseeable drawbacks with this model:

- ◆ apart from a few larger units, the great majority have less than 10 staff
- ◆ major communication and control difficulties for a compact Headquarters staff trying to keep up with up to 30 dispersed units
- ◆ an inefficient and in some cases wholly impracticable dispersal of responsibilities. For instance, it is extremely difficult to see what sort of training planning or delivery could effectively be carried out in the great majority of authority units. In relation to this and other responsibilities, there would inevitably be strong pressures for greater centralisation
- ◆ certain significant responsibilities, in particular budget management, are spread well beyond the current experience base within the Service
- ◆ the inefficient spreading of management responsibilities would certainly fuel additional staffing requirements at local level without thereby adding to the quality or consistency of work carried out.

4. *Structure 2 - Authority Groupings and Headquarters*

4.1 This structure is again a 2-tier structure. This time, however, local authority units have been banded together to form 11 somewhat larger and more consistently sized groupings, covering between 1 and 4 local authority areas (see Appendix 1). Staff groups of about 15 up to 50 would be created.

4.2 The potential strengths of this structure are:

- ◆ minimal change in many areas - Fife, Central and Tayside Regional Departments effectively remain inviolate, while Lothian, Grampian and Highland also continue largely unchanged
- ◆ a more viable spread of management responsibilities than under the first model
- ◆ better career progression opportunities than under the first model.

4.3 Once again, however, there are significant potential problems with this structure:

- ◆ the role of the Manager in such groupings would almost inevitably derogate from that of Authority Reporters, given that in 5 of the 11 groupings there are only 2 or 3 Authority Reporters
- ◆ the resulting confusion in inter-agency relationships would tend to concentrate significant external contacts in the hands of the smaller number of Regional Managers, rather than Authority Reporters
- ◆ the perpetuation of so many existing structures may be seen as unhelpful
- ◆ at the same time, the boundaries of a number of units are quite artificial
- ◆ the Islands authorities are simply tacked on to existing mainland units
- ◆ many units are still too small to give proper effect to some management responsibilities, eg personnel and training
- ◆ for a Service of about 135 professionals, a senior management team numbering 14 seems rather excessive and unwieldy
- ◆ although to a lesser extent than option 1, this model would also tend to inflate staffing requirements without adding value

5. *Structure 3 - Authorities, Regional Groupings and Headquarters*

5.1 This structure, like model 1, builds very clearly on the boundaries of new local authorities. Where it differs is in interposing a middle management tier. This tier could be based around sheriffdom boundaries (as shown in Appendix 2). Given the introduction by the Children (Scotland) Bill of a power to appeal to the Sheriff Principal against a decision of the sheriff in Children's Hearings proceedings, there is in fact some professional basis for using these boundaries. In organisational terms this would create 6 units, each headed by a Reporter Manager with staff groups varying between about 35 and 55. Units would cover between 2 and 7 new local authorities. Each authority would in turn be headed by an Authority Reporter who would be responsible for casework, inter-agency work and team building within the authority area.

5.2 The potential advantages of this structure are:

- ◆ a clear focus for relationships at authority level
- ◆ provision for those relationships that may require regional input (eg the Sheriff Principal, police senior management)
- ◆ little disruption in local casework management
- ◆ a wholly redesigned management structure at middle and upper levels
- ◆ preservation of the strategic role of Headquarters - for instance, less pressure for casework responsibilities to creep up to HQ
- ◆ management responsibilities can be placed where they may be most effectively carried out, with responsibilities for budget management, personnel management, training, estates and contract management lying very much at regional level, albeit with some delegated functions at authority level
- ◆ a clear channel for communications between Headquarters and authorities
- ◆ specialist supports can be grouped on a regional basis - for instance, the post of administrative officer to the Regional Manager could carry IT liaison responsibilities.

5.3 At the same time, there are again potential disadvantages to be noted:

- ◆ the threat of bureaucratisation, with the regional layer constantly justifying its existence through spawning unnecessary work
- ◆ the use of sheriffdom boundaries produces groupings of different size in terms of numbers of local authorities covered and of staff
- ◆ a few authorities (particularly Glasgow) may be large enough to take on the full range of management responsibilities
- ◆ the scope for flexibility in gradings is slightly reduced.

5.4 The first of these issues is by far the most concerning. The issue perhaps turns on, firstly, whether there is a strong management role at this level in the first place; and, secondly, on how regional management staff themselves are managed. In order to test further the need for regional management, a first draft Job Description has been drawn up for the post of Reporter Manager, and is attached at Appendix 3. This Job Description appears to amount to a significant and weighty post; many of the responsibilities outlined could not effectively or efficiently be carried out at a more dispersed level.

5.5 The position of Glasgow, with a staff group more than double the size of any other authority, is a special case no matter what structure is adopted. It may be that some readjustment of responsibilities could be considered within Glasgow and

Strathkelvin. I would not, however, foresee that causing difficulties for the structure as a whole.

6. *Recommendation*

6.1 Extensive discussion within the Reporter's Service has not produced any model which differs markedly from the third structure outlined above. This alone should perhaps caution us to be wary of alternatives. While every structure has potential drawbacks as well as advantages, in my view the disadvantages of other models are so great as to render them unviable.

6.2 While the 3-tier model may seem rather top heavy for a small Service, it may in fact be that it is the very size and dispersed nature of the Service which necessitates that structure. At the same time, it is a model which would make sense to significant external contacts. The issue is then very much how the structure is itself developed and managed. While it may not be possible totally to resist bureaucratisation, it can be vigorously attacked and controlled.

6.3 This discussion has so far proceeded in a somewhat abstract manner. The hard realities of transferring staff from the existing to any new structure will of course involve a certain number of pressures and difficulties. No structure will avoid problems altogether (unless one were to be designed entirely around the needs of a small number of individuals). The third model, like the other two, creates some specific problems while at the same time solving others.

6.4 The Board of SCRA has decided in principle that an option 3 - type structure should be introduced but subject to wide consultation. At a later stage structural issues will feed into formal discussion of transfer issues with staff representatives; consultation at this stage should help to highlight anomalies, bring forward alternatives and generate views on detailed implementation.

7. *Issues for Consultation.*

7.1 Views are sought on these issues,

- ◆ are the 'design issues' appropriate and comprehensive?
- ◆ is an option 3 -type structure best in terms of effectiveness and efficiency?
- ◆ if so, is the suggested design, modelled on sheriffdom boundaries, appropriate?
- ◆ is the draft job description for Reporter Managers appropriate?
- ◆ what should the key accountabilities of Authority Reporters be?
- ◆ how should the tension between local casework autonomy and national consistency of standards be managed?

- ◆ in particular, how should the management relationship between the Reporter Manager and the Authority Reporter work - how authoritative can the Authority Reporter be?

STRUCTURE OPTION 2 - ILLUSTRATION

Grouping	Authorities Covered
Lothian & Borders	Borders West Lothian Edinburgh Midlothian East Lothian
Fife	Fife
Central	Stirling Clackmannan Falkirk
Tayside	Dundee Angus Perth & Kinross
North East	Aberdeen City Aberdeenshire Moray Orkney Shetland
North West	Highland Western Isles
Glasgow	Glasgow
Argyll & Dumbarton	Argyll & Bute Dumbarton & Clydebank East Dunbartonshire
Renfrew & Inverclyde	Inverclyde Renfrew East Renfrewshire
Lanarkshire	North Lanarkshire South Lanarkshire
South West	North Ayrshire East Ayrshire South Ayrshire Dumfries & Galloway

STRUCTURE OPTION 3 - ILLUSTRATION

Grouping	Authorities Covered
Lothian & Borders	Borders West Lothian Edinburgh Midlothian East Lothian
Tayside, Central & Fife	Fife Stirling Clackmannan Falkirk Dundee Angus Perth & Kinross
Grampian, Highlands & Islands	Aberdeen City Aberdeenshire Moray Orkney Shetland Highland Western Isles
North Strathclyde	Argyll & Bute Dumbarton & Clydebank Inverclyde Renfrew East Renfrewshire North Ayrshire East Ayrshire
Glasgow & Strathkelvin	Glasgow East Dunbartonshire
South Strathclyde, Dumfries & Galloway	North Lanarkshire South Lanarkshire Dumfries & Galloway South Ayrshire

Note: East Dunbartonshire, North Lanarkshire and East Ayrshire straddle sheriffdom boundaries.

SCOTTISH CHILDREN'S REPORTER ADMINISTRATION

JOB DESCRIPTION (DRAFT)

Title of Post: *Reporter Manager*

Main Purpose: *(1) To secure the provision of a high quality and effective Reporter Service within a designated region.*

(2) To contribute to the national development of the Reporter Service.

Key Accountabilities:

The postholder is expected, within a designated region and within the framework of national policy, to

1. Practice Management

Ensure the achievement of high standards of practice through

- a. implementation of national practice guidance and best standards
- b. implementation of effective practice management and support systems
- c. providing advice, guidance and support to Authority Reporters and their staff on request
- d. liaising with the Assistant Principal Reporter (Practice) on particularly sensitive or controversial cases
- e. managing appeals to the Sheriff Principal
- f. efficient distribution of practice information and resources
- g. developing and managing in-house specialisms.

2. *Performance Management*

Ensure continuous improvement in performance through

- a. positive implementation of national performance management strategy and systems
- b. positive implementation of national practice audit systems
- c. identifying and taking any corrective action necessary.

3. *Staff Development*

Ensure the continuous development of all staff through

- a. effective implementation of supervision and appraisal systems
- b. development, implementation and ongoing review of a regional training and development plan
- c. positive supervision and appraisal of regional-level support staff and Authority Reporters.

4. *Organisational Development*

Assist the ongoing development of the Administration both nationally and regionally through

- a. ensuring the maintenance of good communication channels between staff in the region and those in Headquarters and other regions
- b. implementation of appropriate and responsive management systems
- c. promoting and disseminating information about professional and administrative initiatives within the region
- d. ensuring a strong personal and regional contribution to the work of the Administration
- e. promoting involvement by all staff in the development of the Administration.

5. *Personnel Management*

Ensure best practice in personnel management through

- a. implementation of the Administration's personnel policies and procedures
- b. securing the fair and effective recruitment of high quality staff

- c. securing appropriate deployment of staff
- d. management of grievance and disciplinary processes
- e. maintenance of good employee relations
- f. implementation of a regional health and safety policy and a health and safety programme of planned improvement

6. ***Budget Management***

Ensure effective financial management within the region through

- a. constructing and agreeing the regional budget
- b. monitoring and managing the regional budget
- c. implementation of the Administration's accounting and control systems and other financial policies and procedures
- d. supervision of delegated budget holders.

7. ***Information Systems Management***

Ensure the provision of effective and appropriate information systems through

- a. managing the cost-effective implementation of the Administration's IS strategy
- b. supporting the fullest effective and appropriate exploitation of IS systems
- c. ensuring the provision of good support and liaison arrangements for all staff
- d. monitoring the effectiveness of IS systems and supports and securing corrective/developmental action as appropriate.

8. ***Estates and Contract Management***

Secure the value for money provision of good quality property and services through

- a. implementation of the Administration's policies and procedures on estates and contract management
- b. monitoring the quality, suitability and occupancy costs of office and Hearings Centre premises and taking appropriate remedial/developmental action

- c. preparing capital development proposals and supporting the implementation of agreed proposals
- d. securing and monitoring the value for money provision of necessary supplies and services.

9. ***External Interfaces***

Maximise effective impact upon the Administration's external environment through

- a. trading on regional level inter-agency relationships
- b. ensuring effective involvement of staff in inter-agency work and training
- c. implementation of the Administration's policies on public and media relations.

10. ***Other***

Maximise personal contribution to the work of the Administration through

- a. embodying and promoting highest standards in all aspects of the post
- b. actively participating in the work of senior management teams
- c. carrying out such other duties as are appropriate to the post and which may be added to this Job Description from time to time.

Accountable to:

Assistant Principal Reporter (Development)

AGENDA ITEM No. 8
NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

Telephone: 01698 332149, Fax: 332095
Extension:
Contact:
Your Ref:
Our Ref: DMcK/HS
Date: 11th August, 1995.

David McKendrick
Director of Social Work
Social Work Department
Scott House
73-77 Merry Street
Motherwell ML1 1JE

Memorandum

To: Chief Executive,
North Lanarkshire Council

From: Director of Social Work,
North Lanarkshire Council

Reporter Service Structure: Consultation Paper

I would refer to the letter to you from Alan Miller, Principal Reporter in the Scottish Children's reporter Administration, dated 20th July, 1995 which asked for your views on the attached consultation paper.

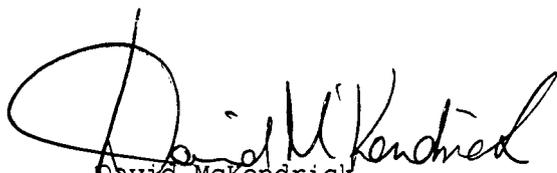
You were good enough to forward this to me for my comments which are as follows.

While appreciating the reasons for the Board of SCRA deciding to introduce an option 3 type structure subject to wide consultation, I do not consider that such a structure necessarily meets the interests of North Lanarkshire and instead would support an option 2 type structure which links only North Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire.

It is my view that such a structure would be of sufficient size to meet the organisational requirements of SCRA while offering the opportunity for effective working relationships. Such relationships may not be so easily obtained were North Lanarkshire to be part of a structure which included this authority with South Lanarkshire, Dumfries and Galloway, and South Ayrshire.

It is my contention that many, if not all of the design issues identified in 2.1 of the paper are capable of being met by an organisation model comprising only North Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire.

Such a model offers the best prospect of achieving effective local working relationships and consistency of practice over a recognisable area, therefore allowing the best quality practice.


David McKendrick,
Director of Social Work.

