

**NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL
REPORT**

To: SCRUTINY PANEL - SERVICE DELIVERY AND PERFORMANCE		Subject: CHILDRENS SERVICES PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK			
Date: 9 MARCH 2006	Ref: JD/MF/JS		

1. Purpose of Report / Introduction

1.1 This report is provided to advise the Scrutiny Panel of work being undertaken within Social Work to improve performance measured against children's service performance indicators.

2. Background

2.1. Childrens service performance indicators are reported to the Scottish Executive on a quarterly and annual basis.

2.2. The performance indicators include a number of measures reflecting specific aspects of children's services. In particular these indicators reflect:

- The academic attainment of Looked After and Accommodated Children
- Staff qualifications in residential care
- Privacy factors in residential units
- Time intervals regarding submission of reports to children's hearings
- Implementation of children's hearing supervision orders

2.3 The majority of these indicators show steady levels of performance or improvements over time. However the measures regarding delivery of children's hearing reports against set timescales and implementation of supervision orders within timescales show need for improvement.

2.4 Recent performance measures of these factors are shown in the following tables.

Social Backgrounds Reports (04/05)

		Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
a)	The number of reports submitted to the Reporter during the quarter	196	221	222	238
b)	The proportion of reports requested by the Reporter which were submitted within 20 days	25.76%	35.08%	26.27%	22.10%

Note: figures for 2005/06 not yet available

Supervision

	Quarter 1 04/05	Quarter 2 04/05	Quarter 3 04/05	Quarter 4 04/05	Quarter 1 05/06	Quarter 2 05/06	Quarter 3 05/06
a) The number of new Supervision requirements made during the period	45	47	40	40	40	37	37
b) The proportion of children seen by a supervising officer within 15 days	26.67%	46.81%	27.50%	22.50%	60.00%	37.84%	25.93%

2.5 The above performance levels show clear indications of a need for improvement but also show large fluctuations in performance.

2.6 In addition to Social Background Reports, Social Work staff also provide a range of other reports to the Reporter such as Initial and Review Reports.

3. Measures to improve performance

3.1. Considering the above figures it is clear that performance improvements are required as regards services to children's hearings. A variety of factors impact on performance in this area.

3.2. Over recent years measures have been put in place over North Lanarkshire to improve recruitment and retention of Social Workers as the service faced a national shortage of qualified Social Work Staff. These measures have only recently led to a position where Social Work teams are fully staffed. It should be noted that a significant number of new staff are only recently qualified. Over 2004/2005 issues of recruitment have impacted on Social Work teams' ability to meet time scales.

3.3 The Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) annual Report for 2004/5 indicates that referral levels to the Reporter to the Children's Panel have been high with North Lanarkshire showing third highest level in Scotland.

3.4 Analysis of the Social Work recording system indicates that the way implementation of supervision is recorded can lead to miscounting. It would appear that fluctuations in performance are often due to the implementation of supervision not being properly recorded as such.

3.5 In September and October 2005 a process mapping exercise was carried out in order to look at children's hearing business processes, including report requests and provision. This process mapping was carried out with PA Consulting, a company commissioned by the Scottish Executive to work with local authorities on the improvement of performance in this area. This process mapping looked at processes operating within Social Work, SCRA and Strathclyde Police, e.g. the process of allocating report requests to staff.

- 3.6 Results of this process mapping were reported to key staff in a half-day seminar held in November 2005 resulting in a range of actions to speed up processes. Following this a draft process model has been circulated for consultation to relevant managers. This means that each agency will adjust administrative and professional processes to improve compliance with time scales. Within Social Work this model will be considered at a further planning event to be held in March 2006, which will lead to each Area Team having in place an area action plan aimed at improving report provision and supervision implementation time scales.
- 3.7 Other issues identified in the process mapping include:
- Inconsistencies in time scales allowed for reports. Requests from SCRA all request reports for a twenty-five day deadline when a twenty-day period may be all that standards allow.
 - Reports are counted as being late when staff are unable to contact families and write to the Reporter to inform them of this.
 - The need for modernisation of systems to allow for electronic transmission of requests and reports across agencies which would speed up the process.
- 3.8 The planning event will also consider setting in place allocation frameworks to ensure that a broader range of staff are available to undertake report requests and implement supervision orders, leading to better compliance with timescales due to the larger number of workers available. This will include staff from Children and Families Teams, staff from Youth Justice Teams and staff from the Early Intervention Team.
- 3.9 Alongside implementation of area action plans guidance on recording will be re-issued to staff.
- 3.10 Progress against performance indicators will continue to be monitored in each area and the plan to improve performance will be reviewed on a quarterly basis as figures become available.
- 3.11 It is important to note that the Departments ability to improve performance in this area will be affected by its ability to retain and recruit staff.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1. The scrutiny panel is asked to note the contents of this report and the action being progressed by Agencies to improve performance.



Jim Dickie
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27th February 2006

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