

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT

<p>Social Work Committee : 21st April, 1998.</p>	<p>Subject : Befriending Scheme and Partnership in Play Project</p>
<p>From : Jim Dickie, Director of Social Work Prepared by : Sandra Paterson, Principal Officer, Child Care</p>	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Committee of the proposals for the setting up of a befriending scheme within North Lanarkshire and a pilot project which aims to provide practical supports for children with disabilities to assist their inclusion in out-of-school care and holiday play scheme provision and to ask for approval for these projects.

2. BACKGROUND

Befriending Project

- 2.1 North Lanarkshire Council has a long history of working with Community Service Volunteers on the Give and Take Project which places young vulnerable people for work experience in their last term at school.

This new proposed project will also be co-ordinated by Community Service Volunteers. This new scheme will, however, be a befriending project. The scheme will be sufficiently flexible to incorporate both existing and future befrienders recruited by social work staff as well as project staff.

The aim of the befriending project will be to provide suitable adult befrienders to be matched with young people aged eight to eighteen years who are considered to be vulnerable, and who are currently in contact with the social work department. These young people may be on a home supervision requirement, need support in terms of their welfare, be currently accommodated within a children's unit or be in the process of moving out into supported accommodation. Currently there are approximately sixty young people who have been identified as in need of such a service.

Partnership in Play Project

- 2.2 In 1996 North Lanarkshire Council established a multi agency working group with a remit to investigate opportunities and methods for including children with disabilities in local leisure and play provision. The major impetus behind the development arose from the 1994 Community Care Consultation where parents and carers highlighted the lack of access by disabled children to local leisure and summer play scheme provision.

The working group successfully ran two time limited initiatives during the summer of 1996. The first, focused on including children with disabilities into an existing after school care

scheme, the second focused on piloting an inclusive summer play scheme. An evaluation report of these two schemes recommended that further progression of these initiatives would require the development of a central support unit as outlined in this proposal.

The primary function of the central support unit would be to raise awareness amongst providers of the rights of disabled children to access the range of local play and leisure provision within their local community and offer them the practical supports necessary to remove barriers to inclusion, through the provision of training, transport and trained sessional staff.

The new proposed pilot project will be co-ordinated by the former 'Save the Children' 'Sparky' Project who have over ten years experience of promoting inclusive play and have a track record of working with North Lanarkshire Council as well as parents and carers groups within the area.

It is intended that the project will be piloted for a one year period in the first instance.

Lanarkshire Development Agency have agreed to contribute to the pilot, as part of their wider commitment to develop 'out of school care' initiatives within North Lanarkshire

3. PROPOSALS

Befriending Project

- 3.1 CSV propose to recruit, train and support local volunteers in conjunction with social work department staff.
- 3.2 It is proposed that the scheme operate throughout North Lanarkshire and that approximately forty young people are offered a befriending service at any one time.
- 3.3 The befrienders will give companionship, support, attention and advice to the young people whom they will meet approximately on a weekly basis. The service will be offered as part of a care plan for that young person and will be seen to enhance the young person's self esteem, social skills and ability to make relationships.
- 3.4 Depending on the age of the young person, links will be developed with the two Through care projects currently operating within North Lanarkshire and who offer a service to young people aged fifteen years and above.

Partnership in Play Project

- 3.5 Sparky propose to recruit, train and support a team of sessional staff to facilitate and support disabled children's access to the existing twenty-two after school projects in North Lanarkshire.

A small budget will be made available to the project for the provision of adapted transport, equipment and toys and the recruitment of sessional staff.

- 3.6 It is proposed that the project operate throughout North Lanarkshire and that approximately twenty-four new full time supported places are created in after school care schemes during the summer holidays.

3.7 In addition to providing trained personal assistants for disabled children, the project will also offer support, advice and training to the existing staff and management committees within these settings to raise skills and confidence and promote best practice in working with disabled children.

3.8 It is intended that the pilot will be sufficiently flexible to extend its support services to a wide range of existing summer play schemes and play settings, including existing community based 'special needs' schemes.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Monies for the Befriending Project have already been agreed at the previous Social Work Committee at a cost of £55,000.

4.2 The total cost of the Partnership in Play project is estimated at £73,847. The North Lanarkshire contribution of £49,847 has been identified within existing child care budgets. Lanarkshire Development Agency have agreed to a contribution of £24,000 towards the overall cost of the scheme.

5. PERSONNEL

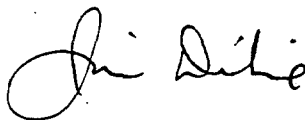
5.1 Community Service Volunteers will be responsible for the appointment of staff to the Befriending Project which will be one full time and one part time member of staff and a part time clerical assistant.

5.2 The Sparky Project will be responsible for the appointment of staff to the Partnership in Play Project which will be one part time member of staff (28 hours) and sessional support staff.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (1) Approves the proposals for the Befriending Scheme and Partnership in Play Project
- (2) Asks the Director of Social Work to report on the outcome of the Pilot Project, Partnership in Play.



Jim Dickie,
Director of Social Work.
18th March, 1998.