

AGENDA ITEM No. **18**

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

TO: Social Work Committee	Subject: COSLA Publication: "Asylum Seekers - Model Policy/Guidance for Councils".
FROM: Jim Dickie Director of Social Work	
DATE OF COMMITTEE: 6 October 1998	
REPORT AUTHOR: Peter Barry	
REF: JD/GMCI/PB/JMCF	

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform members of the Committee about a recent COSLA Publication: "Asylum Seekers - Model Policy/Guidance for Councils"

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The manner in which Councils have dealt with asylum seekers has been complicated by the introduction of The Asylum and Immigration Act 1996. This Act imposed major restrictions on people entering Britain and claiming asylum in terms of eligibility to claim a range of Social Security benefits.
- 2.2 It was felt that the duties and responsibilities of Councils in respect of income maintenance and provision of accommodation and other services were not being discharged in a consistent way throughout Scottish Local Authorities.
- 2.3 The motivation behind COSLA's model policy/guidance document was to ensure that:
- ◆ The actions of Councils are consistent with their legal responsibilities towards refugees and asylum seekers.
 - ◆ The actions of Councils meet the terms of the Special Grants which provide reimbursement from Government for Councils' expenses in assisting destitute asylum seekers and their dependent children. COSLA can act on behalf of Councils who experience difficulty in agreeing arrangements for the reimbursement of expenses.
 - ◆ Councils are assured that they are employing efficient and cost effective ways of meeting their responsibilities.
- 2.4 The document sets down the background legislation and clarifies the role that the Social Work Department should play in terms of discharging responsibilities under Section 12 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 and Sections 22 and 25 of The Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

3 PROPOSALS

- 3.1 An interdepartmental group has been formed involving Social Work, Housing, Education and Legal Services. It is proposed that this group in consultation with relevant outside agencies should draft a Code of Guidance on Asylum Seekers for North Lanarkshire Council.
- 3.2 Given that payments made by the Social Work Department described in paragraph 2.4 are the only routes for financial support to asylum seekers by which Councils can claim reimbursement, it is proposed that the Social Work Department acts as the lead department in this matter.
- 3.3 Copies of the report can be made available to members upon request.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Committee is asked to:
- i) Note the content of this report
 - ii) approve the proposal for the Social Work Department to act as lead department in matters relating to asylum seekers in North Lanarkshire.



Jim Dickie
Director of Social Work
17 September 1998

For further information on this report please contact . George McNally, Principal Officer (Strategy) (TEL: 01698 332063)