

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT

Social Work Committee : June 1999	Subject : Social Work Services Inspectorate Sex Offenders Review - Inspection of Case Management in North Lanarkshire
From : Jim Dickie, Director of Social Work Prepared by : John S Scott, Principal Officer, Criminal Justice	

1. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

the purpose of this report is to :

- Inform the Committee of the results of an inspection, undertaken by the Social Work Services Inspectorate, into the case management of sex offenders in North Lanarkshire

2. **BACKGROUND**

A number of matters concerning work with sex offenders should be noted as relevant to the background to this inspection. All have previously been reported to Committee.

- The inspection of the case management of sex offenders was undertaken as part of Phase II of the review of sex offenders undertaken by the Scottish Office. Phase I resulted in the publication of the Scottish Office consultation document 'A Commitment to Protect' which concerned improvement in the management of sex offenders in the community. A formal response to the consultation process, has not been issued by the Scottish Office. The proposal contained in the document, the establishment of an expert panel, chaired by Lady Cosgrove has been implemented and this panel will report later on measures associated with the management of sex offenders.
- The inspection also follows the announcement, by the Minister for Home Affairs, following the murder of Scott Simpson, in Aberdeen, by Stephen Leisk and the subsequent report by Dr James McManus, that the Social Work Services Inspectorate would inspect the supervision of all sex offenders in Aberdeen, and inspect the supervision of sex offenders in a sample of other local authorities across Scotland.
- Consultation has also been held in relation to the revision of guidelines to agencies involved in the management of sex offenders. A response to the consultation process has not yet been issued.
- North Lanarkshire Council revised its arrangements for the assessment of risk and management of sex offenders in the community in 1998.

The inspection of case management of sex offenders was undertaken by the Social Work Services Inspectorate in September of last year. Verbal feedback was given to the authority at that time, and a written summary of finding about practice has now been received. The

Social Work Services Inspectorate will publish an overview report of the inspection, drawing conclusions for practice across Scotland. This report will include details of other work undertaken for the review, on arrangements for accommodating sex offenders and enhancing community safety. It is not known whether local authorities will be identified in the overview report.

3. INSPECTION

3.1 FOCUS

The inspectors examined case records concerning 26 offenders on probation, 3 subject to post release licence, 2 eligible for voluntary after-care, 5 on Supervised Release Orders, 2 offenders in custody and subject to notification under Circular SW 11/94, 13 cases concerning sexually aggressive young people, and 21 Social Enquiry Reports prepared for courts.

3.2 FINDINGS

Their results of the inspection are very positive for North Lanarkshire. Positive comment was received on :

- The consistent attention given to risk assessment.
- The action plans established at the beginning of the supervision period
- Frequency of contact with the offender, often exceeding that required by National standards.
- Action to enforce compliance with a probation order or other statutory supervision.
- Work undertaken, during the period of supervision, to tackle offending.
- Standard of recording.
- The resolution of offenders problems related to public hostility.
- Pro-active and effective work with offenders subject to voluntary aftercare
- The high proportion of young offenders who had attended a personal change programme or the equivalent. This was higher than in any other authority inspected.
- Arrangements for quality assurance.
- The risk assessment package developed for work with both adult and young offenders and the structure established for the training of staff.
- The corporate responsibility assumed for the quality of professional practice.

3.2.1 AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT / ACTION BY SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT

A few areas for improvement were identified :

- In Social Enquiry Reports, improvement in the analysis of offences and link with previous offending.

Action : The reports examined in the Inspection predate the implementation of the revised Risk Assessment and Intervention Process, positively commented on in the inspection. This has dealt with any problems identified in the Inspection.

- Some of the exercises for offenders included in the Risk Assessment and Intervention Process were considered to lack context. It was felt that clearer identification of source documents would help staff access further information and advice.

Action : The Risk Assessment and Implementation Process is currently being reviewed to take account of this comment.

- In some cases of work with young people, weaknesses were seen arising from an over emphasis on sexual aggression, at the expense of other immediate needs.

Action : A sampling exercise of the child care review minutes and action plan will be carried out and steps taken to redress the balance where there are difficulties

- In some cases of work with young people, planning and review needs to be more consistent.

Action : Performance indicators have already been developed for children who are Looked After and Accommodated (LAA) which deal with the timing of Child Care reviews and the existence of care plans. A recent survey is currently being collated and will be fed back to the area teams. The assessment and care management package will be introduced in May, 1999. Looked After children will also be monitored in relation to the implementation of the assessment and action plans.

4. CONCLUSION

The overall conclusion in the inspection is that North Lanarkshire manages the supervision of sex offenders well. This was seen to be well planned, with evidence of offence focused personal change work and regular review of progress. Frequency of contact was seen to be based on assessment of the risk posed. North Lanarkshire was seen to have adopted a comprehensive and integrated approach to managing this work. Weaknesses were seen to relate to inexperience and over enthusiasm rather than poor practice. It was considered that North Lanarkshire had shown significant progress from which others could learn.

5. RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is asked :

- To note the results of the inspection.



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Director of Social Work

May 26th 1999

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