

## NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

## REPORT

TO : Social Work Committee	Subject :  Scottish Executive Annual Report Visit to North Lanarkshire
FROM : J Dickie Director of Social Work	
DATE OF COMMITTEE : 22 August 2000	
REPORT AUTHOR : M. Fegan, Head of Social Work Services	
REF : MF/MM	

**1. CONTENT & PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To update Committee following the Scottish Executive Annual Report visit to North Lanarkshire on 14th June 2000. The Annual Report is intended to cover the effectiveness of the Local Authority's operation of its services. The intention is for these reports to form part of a "rationalisation of the existing planning and reporting systems."
- 1.2 This Committee report highlights the general issues raised by the Social Work Services Inspectorate (SWSI) of all Local Authorities as well as the specific issues raised in respect of North Lanarkshire Social Work Services. The report also details the format of the visit including presentations and site visits.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Social Work Services Inspectorate (SWSI) of the Scottish Executive advised Local Authorities that it would be undertaking Annual Report visits to Local Authorities in the document "Aiming for Excellence: Modernising Social Work Services in Scotland," which was published in March 1999. This report was presented to Social Work Committee on 8 June 1999.
- 2.2 The Director of Social Work advised Social Work Committee on the 6th June 2000 of the date of the proposed Annual Report visit.

**3. FORMAT OF VISIT**

- 3.1 Prior to the visit, the SWSI representatives had collated information about North Lanarkshire from various sources including strategic plans, Best Value reviews (only those sent to the Scottish Executive), Accounts Commission statistical and performance information, financial information and statistical returns).

3.2 Core questions were asked of all thirty two Local Authorities. Issues covered included the following :

**a) Resources -**

- ◆ Details of budgets for 2000/2001 for childrens services, community care and criminal justice including comparisons with 1999/2000 budgets.
- ◆ What resources are allocated to cross cutting issues
- ◆ What information is used to determine resource allocation

**b) Local Information Systems**

- ◆ Details of the quality assurance information systems used for evaluating practice on a 'day to day' basis.
- ◆ What technological resources are currently available within Social Work Services and whether there are plans for further developments.

**c) Supporting staff**

- ◆ Details of how the Authority supports staff in their roles, addresses health and safety and manages to change and develop organisational learning.
- ◆ Whether the Local Authority is able to recruit sufficient well qualified social work, social care and other staff, and areas of particular difficulty in recruitment.

**d) Safeguarding Vulnerable Users**

- ◆ How the Authority safeguards children and vulnerable adults in the provision of services.

3.3 Specific issues addressed in respect of North Lanarkshire included the following.

**a) Expenditure on Older People**

- ◆ Noted older people account for 50% of Local Authority expenditure but services per 1000 population are lower than in any other Local Authority.
- ◆ How might resources be re-allocated or services re-designed to accommodate changing demographic, health and social profiles.

**b) Service Availability**

- ◆ Information was requested on what progress had been made on developing respite for children with a disability in the school holidays and an out of hours service for those with mental health problems.

### c) Consultation

- ◆ Further information was requested regarding the Department's consultation with children in the development of the Children's Service Plan and the development of links with people from ethnic minorities. Information was requested on the outcome of both of the exercises, including what learning might be transferable to other Social Work Services.

## 4. FORMAT OF THE VISIT

4.1 A number of thematic presentations were provided over the course of the days visit which addressed the general and specific issues raised by SWSI as well as the promotion of positive achievements realised since the Council was established in 1996.

4.2 Areas covered included the following

- ◆ **Social Work Resources** which noted a year on year budget increase since the Council was established.
- ◆ **Performance Management** which included the Councils commitment to the provision of quality services, benchmarking monitoring, review and continuous improvement.
- ◆ **SWIS/Intranet** which covered public information and the use of modern communications to manage service delivery.
- ◆ **Services to People with a Learning Disability** which covered service review and the modernisation of service provision in partnership with users, carers and other agencies.
- ◆ **Criminal Justice Services** which included the Councils commitment to public safety, prevention and inter-agency working.
- ◆ **Child Care Services** which included difficulties experienced in recruiting and retaining qualified fieldwork and residential staff.
- ◆ **Integrated Criminal Justice and Child Care Services** which is a major priority for the Government. The Council was able to demonstrate significant developments in respect of the prevention of youth crime.
- ◆ **Community Care Developments** which addressed all care groups and focussed on partnership working. The services provided by the new Merrystone Care Base were emphasised.

4.3 The day was led by the Convener and Director of Social Work. As well as key officers being in attendance, a range of Department Agencies and partner providers from the independent sector participated.

- 4.4 Locations used included the Wishaw Area Team, Kirknowe Centre and the Merrystone Care Base. This provided SWSI the opportunity to observe the geography and level of deprivation of North Lanarkshire, as well as affording the opportunity to observe new capital investment in resources.
- 4.5 A range of briefing notes and public information was provided on the day. SWSI also requested additional information of areas of interest and highlighted during presentations. Items included
- ◆ the draft Customer Services Charter
  - ◆ Talking Mats - a means of communicating with children with learning disabilities about service provision.

## 5. THE NEXT STAGE

- 5.1 SWSI are visiting all thirty two Local Authorities over a period of weeks. Specific issues raised with each Local Authority varied as did Local Authority arrangements for the Annual Report.
- 5.2 The last site visit to a Local Authority is scheduled for 28th July 2000. It is anticipated that the final report will be available to be presented to Parliament in October 2000. Factual accuracy will be checked with Local Authorities before the final document is produced.
- 5.3 Initial feedback on the day from SWSI was positive, they commented on the commitment of staff, Departmental achievements presented as well as the positive working relationships between officers.

## 6 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Committee is requested to
- (i) note the contents of the report
  - (ii) request that the Director of Social Work report to Committee the findings of the SWSI Annual Report when made available to the Authority.



**Jim Dickie**  
**Director of Social Work**

**13th July 2000**

For Further Information on this report please contact Mary Fegan, Head of Social Work Services (Tel 01698 332004)