

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL
REPORT

TO: Social Work Committee	Subject: Social Work Services Inspectorate - Managing the Risk - An Inspection of Sex Offender Cases in the Community
FROM: Jim Dickie Director of Social Work	
DATE OF COMMITTEE: 25th January, 2001.	
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REF: C_0089	

1. CONTENT AND PURPOSE OF REPORT

the purpose of this report is to :

- Inform Committee of the findings of an inspection undertaken by the Social Work Services Inspectorate into the 'Management of Sex Offender Cases in the Community' which included cases from North Lanarkshire.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 A previous report was provided to Committee in June 1999 on the interim report received from the Social Work Services Inspectorate on their inspection of work with Sex Offenders in North Lanarkshire. This report to Committee concerns the final report now published by the Inspectorate and includes cases from other Local Authorities.

2.2 A number of matters concerning work with sex offenders should be noted as relevant background to the 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 then Scottish Office. Phase I resulted in the publication of the Scottish Office consultation document 'A Commitment to Protect' which concerned improvements in the management of sex offenders in the community. A formal response to the consultation process has not yet been issued by the Scottish Office. The proposals 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 followed the announcement by the Minister for Home Affairs, after the murder of Scott Simpson in Aberdeen 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 was also held in relation to the revision of guidelines to agencies involved in the management of sex offenders. Revised guidance was issued in August 2000.
- North Lanarkshire Council revised its arrangements for the assessment of risk and management of sex offenders in the community in 1998. This is currently being revised.

2.3 The inspection of the 'Case Management of Sex Offenders' was undertaken by the Social Work Services Inspectorate in September 1998. The Social Work Services Inspectorate has now published this inspection report drawing conclusions for practice across Scotland.

3. THE INSPECTION

3.1 The inspectors examined case records in North Lanarkshire 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, 13 cases concerning sexually aggressive young people, and 21 social enquiry reports prepared for courts.

3.2 The results of the inspection are drawn in general terms for the Authorities inspected, with little specific comment on each Authority. Positive comment was noted, however, on the degree of integration between Criminal Justice and Child Care Services in North Lanarkshire for risk assessment of, and intervention with both adult and young sex offenders.

3.3 The Inspectorate makes 5 recommendations :

- **Recommendation 1 :** The Scottish Executive should require Local Authorities to nominate a supervising officer at the start of sentence in all cases where a sex offender is imprisoned for 4 years or more, and should also require them to promote the use of voluntary social work assistance for all sex offenders sentenced to shorter periods of custody. The Scottish Executive should provide additional funding to support such work.

Comment : North Lanarkshire supports this recommendation, but already offers voluntary contact with sex offenders living in the community. Work undertaken with sex offenders was commented on positively by the Inspectorate. (see Section 3.4 below)

- **Recommendation 2 :** Local Authorities should take steps to ensure that they have access to the best possible information about the scale and severity of sexually aggressive behaviour by children and young people in their area, on both an individual and aggregate basis.

Comment : An audit of activity in relation to sex offenders - young and adult - is undertaken by the Social Work Department. This is undertaken to inform the management of activity in which Social Work staff are involved, and the resource implications of this work, including community and staff safety issues.

- **Recommendation 3 :** Local Authorities should ensure that their work with sexually aggressive children and young people is informed by emerging knowledge about effective practice in addressing offending behaviour, whilst continuing to safeguard and promote their welfare and take account of their needs.

Comment : The Social Work Department's risk assessment and intervention programme for sex offenders is based on the body of research into effectiveness of work with this care group. The training programme associated with this is built into the Departmental Annual Training Plan.

- **Recommendation 4 :** Local Authorities should institute recording policies which will ensure that social work case records are more clearly focused on the reasons for intervention, the expected outcomes of such intervention, and the methods for achieving these.

Comment : The Social Work Department supports this recommendation, and has incorporated these views into the development of the Social Work Information System (SWIS 2000). Guidance on case recording is currently being reviewed to take account of Human Rights legislation and will incorporate the comments made in the inspection report.

- **Recommendation 5 :** Local Authorities should put into place quality control and quality assurance systems for social work practice in respect of both Criminal Justice and Children's Services, to ensure that practice is of the best possible standard and is appropriately focused on risk.

Comment : The Social Work Department supports this recommendation, and had already put this into effect in the establishment of arrangements to improve risk assessment.

4.0 Findings in respect of North Lanarkshire

4.1 Positive comments made by the Inspectorate in their preliminary report on North Lanarkshire were reported previously to Committee, and are noted below for information :

- Consistent attention was seen to be given to risk assessment.
 - Action plans were established consistently at the beginning of the supervision period
 - Frequency of contact with the offender often exceeded that required by National standards.
- Action to enforce compliance with a probation order or other statutory supervision was consistent.
- Work undertaken, during the period of supervision to tackle offending behaviour was consistent.
 - Standard of recording was satisfactory.
 - Work with sex offenders subject to voluntary aftercare was seen to be pro active and effective.
 - The proportion of young offenders who had attended a personal change programme or the equivalent was higher than in any other authority inspected.
 - Arrangements for quality assurance were seen to be satisfactory.

- Positive comment was made on 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 was noted.

4.2 A few areas for improvement were noted.

- In Social Enquiry Reports there is a need for improvement in the analysis of offences and links 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 has been reviewed to take account of this comment.

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

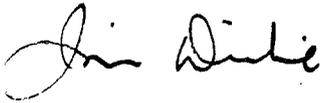
Action : Performance indicators have been developed for children who are Looked After and Accommodated (LAA) which deal with the timing of Child Care reviews and the existence of care plans. The assessment and care management package introduced by SWIS 2000 supports effective planning of work. Looked After children are also monitored in relation to the implementation of assessment and action plans.

4. CONCLUSION

The overall conclusion in the inspection is that work with sex offenders 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. A number of changes have been made to the policy and practice arrangements for managing sex offenders in North Lanarkshire since the inspection took place. These are consistent with the general recommendations from the inspection report

5. RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report.



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28 December 2000

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