

## NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

## REPORT

To: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE		Subject: PROGRESS REPORT ON THE REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH LANARKSHIRE RESIDENTIAL CHILD CARE SERVICES
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		
Date: 23 August 2001	Ref: MF/MM	

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT / INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. To advise Committee of the work being progressed to improve the quality of the Council's Residential Child Care Sector following the Member/Officer Working group and to seek approval for the recommendations contained within the report

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1. A member/officer group was established to review and develop the services provided by the Councils Residential Child Care Sector. A report was provided by the group to Social Work Committee of 24th May 2001.
- 2.2. The report of the 24th May 2001 noted the success of the Council's Youth Strategy in supporting increasing numbers of young people at home. It was recognised that for a small number of young people the preferred option will be to be cared for in a quality residential care setting. This report provides further information on action being taken to continue to improve the quality of the service provided.

**3. PROPOSALS / CONSIDERATIONS**

## 3.1. Improvements to the physical environment

- Monthly monitoring meetings have been introduced between senior officers from Social Work and Housing and Technical Services and the Contractor to progress work plans. A pilot scheme has been introduced to monitor and action repairs. If successful this will be introduced across all units.
- An additional £80,000 has been allocated by the Department to improve the physical environment of each unit. Work is progressing within the timescale and should be completed by December 2001.
- Social Work and Housing and Property Services have identified single, nominated liaison officers to improve communication and progress repairs and maintenance.
- Budget allocations have been reviewed to allow Homes to undertake minor repairs themselves. Each has access to a handyman who will assist with building and ground maintenance.
- A rolling programme of repairs and maintenance has been introduced, commencing at Pine Court in Cumbemauld.

- Exterior CCTV monitoring systems have been installed at each unit to ensure the safety of staff and young people and the protection of property. Young people were consulted about the arrangement.

### 3.2. Neighbourhood Links

- Further local community meetings have continued, attended by the Local Elected Members and Social Work Officers. Recent meetings have allowed the Council to discuss and comment on the developments within the Units.

### 3.3. Partnership with Strathclyde Police

Regular monthly meetings have been initiated with the following developments taking place.

- A programme of joint training is being developed to promote better understanding of each Agencies role and improve communication links.
- Police liaison officers have been identified for each of the Children's Units to promote positive links between young people, staff and the Police within a community safety framework.
- Joint procedures are being developed for reporting, locating, return and recording of information regarding young people who may be missing or whose whereabouts are unknown.

### 3.4. Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care (SIRCC)

- In partnership with officers from the Social Work Department STRCC will undertake a comprehensive review of residential child care services within North Lanarkshire; commencing September 2001.
- Individual unit development plans will be established to help inform the residential child care strategy. The review will also inform the future need for residential child care.
- The Institute will provide training for thirty residential staff on sexuality and sexual health, commencing September 2001.

### 3.5. Staff from Social Work and Education continue to work closely to support the attendance of accommodated young people at school. Action proposed is consistent with the findings of the joint Social Work/Education Report 'Learning with Care'. Action being implemented/developed, include

- Developing tracking systems to monitor and evaluate young peoples education performance.
- Re-emphasising the role as corporate parents to encourage, support and maintain young people in appropriate educational environments.
- Examining ways in which to provide educationally rich environments within each children's unit.
- Developing a programme of joint training with colleagues from Education with a view to effectively supporting young people within the Education system.
- An Education funded project has been implemented providing lessons within Pine Court Children's unit for those young people who are either excluded or refuse to attend school. This project also provides evening classes .homework support, to young people within Torrance Avenue Children's Unit. The project also offers education support to a foster family

### 3.6. Care Planning

- Sixteen young people are currently receiving additional support from services purchased from Includem to assist progress their care plans. Young people will be supported to return to and remain in the community.
- The number of senior child care officers externally managing the residential units has been changed to three to enable a greater focus on standards and practice. The posts will also monitor care planning.

### 3.7. Staffing

- Unit Managers posts have been regraded to help recruit experienced, qualified staff consistent with the findings of the member/officer group. A Unit Manager vacancy will be advertised within the next few weeks.

### 3.8. Development Forum - Unit Managers

- Regular meetings have been introduced involving unit managers and other senior officers to share skills, experience and best practice.

3.9 Consultation to take place with trades union regarding personnel implications of this report.

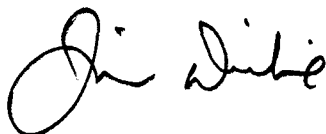
## 4. REGRADING OF CARE STAFF

4.1. The member/officer group requested consideration be given to the re-grading of staff to assist with recruitment and retention. It is expected that the Social Services Council and the introduction of Regulation of Care Standards will introduce qualification standards for residential care staff. To encourage staff to seek training in anticipation of these arrangements it is proposed that as a first step regrading be linked to the possession of relevant qualifications. Discussions have been arranged with the Council's Personnel Services to discuss the proposals. Advice had been sought from SIRCC regarding the gradings likely to be recommended by the Commission to allow the Council to be 'ahead of the game', unfortunately these are not yet available.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Committee is asked to

- (i) note the progress on implementing the proposals from the member/officer working group;
- (ii) to request the Director of Social Work to provide further reports to Committee on the progress of section 4.1 of the report;
- (iii) otherwise note the contents of the report.



**Jim Dickie**  
**Director of Social Work**  
**August 2001**

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