

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: 25 October 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 in conjunction with the Member/Officer Working Group. As well as to seek approval for the recommendations contained within the report.

### 2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A Member/Officer Group was established to review and develop services provided by the Council's Residential Child Care Sector. A report was provided by the Group to the Social Work Committee of 23 August 2001.
- 2.2 The report of 23 August 2001 noted the success of the Council's Youth Strategy in supporting significantly increased numbers of young people within the community while recognising that, for a small number of young people, the preferred option will be to be cared for in a quality residential care environment. This report provides further information on action being taken to continue to improve the quality of service provided.

### 3 PROPOSALS / CONSIDERATIONS

#### 3.1 Improvement to Physical Environment:

- Monthly monitoring meetings continue between Senior Officers from Social Work, Housing and Technical Services and the Contractor in order to monitor and progress work plans.
- New technology introduced into each of the children's units has enabled a system for monitoring and progressing repairs to be introduced. This will be fully operational by the end of October 2001.
- Work to upgrade the physical environment of each unit is progressing within timescales. The upgrading work at one unit is now complete and has dramatically improved the physical environment of that unit, created additional space to support young people's education in line with the document "Learning With Care" and has resulted in positive feedback from staff and young people about the environment in which they live and work.
- Social Work and Housing and Property Services have identified a single, nominated Liaison Officer to improve communication and progress work identified for the additional work spend. Discussions continue to take place about the need to ensure an ongoing co-ordinated response to repairs and maintenance issues.
- Units report that being given access to minor repair budgets as well as a Handyman has been a positive development in allowing the timeous repair of minor faults.
- Exterior CCTV monitoring and door entry systems have now been installed at each unit. This has provided additional safety for staff and young people as well as the protection of property.

The introduction of these systems has discouraged locals from congregating around our children's units resulting in a reduction in vandalism, abusive behaviour and the level of Police involvement.

### 3.2 Neighbourhood Links:

- Local community meetings continue, attended by local Elected Members, Social Work Officers and Community representatives. It is proposed to extend this working forum to all units allowing positive discussion and comment on all aspects of residential child care.

### 3.3 Lanarkshire Integrated Youth Health Service:

- Lanarkshire Integrated Youth Health Service has been initiated to improve the quality of health services provided to young people in both North and South Lanarkshire. Senior Social Work and Primary Care Trust Officers are currently developing a range of Youth Health Initiatives which will deliver a better service to all young people supported by the Social Work Department. The Integrated Youth Health Service is currently looking at issues of Self Harm, Mental Health and Sexual Health for young people who are currently in the Authority's care.

### 3.4 Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care (S.I.R.C.C.)

- A comprehensive review of child care services within North Lanarkshire is currently underway in conjunction with the above Institute.
- The Institute will provide a brief initial report for a future Committee, which will establish North Lanarkshire's position in relation to the National Agenda and performance statistics. It is expected that the Institute will, in conjunction with Senior Social Work Officers, provide Individual Unit Development plans as well as a Corporate plan which will inform the future need for residential child care provision, by March 2002.
- The Institute, during September 2001, provided 2-three day training courses for 30 residential staff on sexuality and sexual health. The staff who attended these courses provided extremely positive feedback and will be able to take their learning back to their individual units. Discussions are also taking place with the Institute about further training, particularly in relation to team work, working with difficult/disruptive behaviour and care planning.

### 3.5 Performance Management Planning 3 (PMP3)

Residential child care services within North Lanarkshire are being audited as a follow-on to the Best Value Review of this sector. The audit will then examine the full range of residential child care provision within North Lanarkshire with the initial report being provided to the auditors by mid-November 2001. The final audit report and the recommendation of the auditors will be available by March 2002. This is a significant piece of work which, in conjunction with the work being undertaken by S.I.R.C.C. (see 3.4), will help provide a comprehensive overview of North Lanarkshire's residential child care service. It is anticipated that a range of development points will be identified and these will provide the focus for future service development.

### 3.6 Staff from Social Work and Education continue to work closely to develop systems in order to Support the education of young people who are accommodated in line with the joint Social Work/Education report "Learning With Care".

- Some £25,000 monies will be required to facilitate the integration of the Education Department's SEEMIS system and the Social Work Department's SWIS system in order to allow the effective monitoring and tracking of young people's educational performance while they are accommodated. Each children's unit is currently developing their environment in order to provide appropriate space, with relevant reference materials for young people wishing to enhance their educational prospects.
- A programme of joint training with colleagues from Education is being developed which will ensure effective educational support for young people who are accommodated.
- The Education funded project provided within Pine Court children's unit for those young people who were either excluded or refused to attend school is currently being evaluated. It initially appears to have been extremely successful with a number of young people who attend this project now being re-integrated into mainstream education. The evaluation of this project may recommend similar unit based support by specialist teachers to each children's unit within the authority. The project has also been successful in offering homework support to young people within Torrance Avenue and Mitchell Street Children's Units as well as a foster family. A fuller

briefing will be available for Committee following the review of the first year of the project's operation.

### 3.7 Partnership with Strathclyde Police

Regular monthly meetings continue between Unit Managers, Senior Social Work officials and Senior Police Officers.

### 3.8 Care Planning

19 young people are currently receiving additional support services purchased from Includem to progress identified need within their care plans. Initial feed back is encouraging with young people being supported to return to and remain in the community.

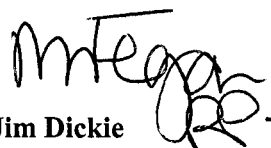
## 4 REGRADING OF CARE STAFF / STAFFING

4.1 No definitive advice has to date been forthcoming from SIRCC regarding qualifications for staff regarding the Regulation of Care which will relate the remuneration for residential child care workers to qualifications. North Lanarkshire officers remain at the forefront of discussions in relation to staff regrading in the hope that this will assist with recruitment and retention of quality residential child care staff. Discussions are also taking place with the Unions and Personnel Sections regarding this matter as well as the re-grading of senior staff within each unit.

## 5 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Committee is asked to:

- (i) Note the progress on implementing the proposals from the Member Officer Working Group.
- (ii) Otherwise note the contents of the report.



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**Director of Social Work**  
**October 2001**

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