

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: 20 December 2001	Ref: JB/JH	

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT / INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 To advise Committee of the continued work being undertaken to improve the quality of the Councils Residential Child Care sector 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 services provided by the Council's Residential Child Care sector. A report was provided by the Group to Social Work Committee of 24 May 2001.
- 2.2 The report of 24 May 2001 noted the success of the Councils Youth Strategy in supporting increasing numbers of young people at home. Recognition was given that for a small number of young people the preferred option would be to be cared for in a quality residential setting. This report provides further information on action being taken to continue improve the quality of service provided.

**3. PROPOSALS / CONSIDERATIONS**

**3.1 Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care (SIRCC):**

- In partnership with officers from the Social Work Department, SIRCC have allocated a consultant who will facilitate the construction of individual unit development plans. A consultant, in conjunction with Unit Managers will analyse current functioning, consider the strength and development points for each unit. Particular consideration will be given to staff development and training. Unit development plans will be based on the SIRCC publication DIY Quality Review Pack "Furnivall et al, 2000". Individual development plans will be constructed in partnership with Unit Management Teams, staff, young people, Children's Rights Officer and "Who Cares?" staff.
- Individual Unit Development Plans will be completed by January 2002 and will help inform the Residential Child Care Strategy. SIRCC, in order to inform their strategic review of Residential Child Care Services in North Lanarkshire, will consult a range of agencies providing support to vulnerable young people within North Lanarkshire in order to gain a full picture of the Authority's child care resources. These services impact on residential child care and therefore their position must be considered in an overall review. This review will be reported to Committee in April 2002.

- SIRCC is centrally funded to deliver services to the residential child care sector in terms of education and development. It is possible that one outcome of this work could lead to an offer of a comprehensive education and training programme for North Lanarkshire Council employees and other providers in the Council area. Examples of this training and education could include:
  - (a) Establishment by SIRCC of a North Lanarkshire area HNC Group which would mean that a significant number of the Authority's workforce could gain a recognised qualification within an 18 month period. This would allow the Authority to provide appropriate training, at no cost, to its residential child care staff group. This training would deliver a qualified staff group in line with anticipated national standards.
  - (b) SIRCC has already been involved with the residential child care staff delivering short courses based on sexuality and sexual health. SIRCC is committed to continuing to offer North Lanarkshire short courses based on identified learning needs of staff.
  - (c) SIRCC can also contribute to a programme for newly recruited workers. This would provide under-pinning knowledge through short course modules which would allow progression to SVQ/HNC qualifications.
  - (d) SIRCC would provide and deliver training in conjunction with the Departmental Training Team who play a pivotal role in defining training needs and the delivery of courses to achieve those needs.

### 3.2 **Community Relations/Neighbourhood Links:**

- Community meetings continue to take place, attended by local Elected Members and Social Work Officers. Evidence exists that these meetings are improving community relations with the focus changing to productive, pro-active discussion rather than reactive response to difficulties. They continue to offer the opportunity for informed discussion, shared understanding while providing a forum to comment on future developments. Relationships with local community will always be of a 'Roller Coaster' nature. The aim is to ensure that constructive relationships exist.

### 3.3 **Partnerships with Strathclyde Police:**

- Regular monthly meetings continue between the Residential Child Care Operational Managers and identified liaison officers from Strathclyde Police.
- Joint training continues to be developed in order to promote a better understanding of each agency's role and improve communication links. A conference/training day involving Police, Social Work, Education, Who Cares?, young people and Includem has will take place in February 2002.
- Police liaison officers continue to link with each children's unit getting to know staff and young people in order to promote positive links between young people, staff and the Police.
- The Police have, as part of this initiative, provided specialist support and training for residential staff and young people regarding drug misuse. The Police have also taken young people and staff to visit Police offices experiencing how the Police operate within North Lanarkshire. Several young people have also spent time with the Police Traffic Division based at Motherwell. These activities contribute towards more positive relationships between young people and the police.

- Joint procedures have been developed for reporting, locating, return and recording of information regarding young people who maybe missing or whose whereabouts are unknown. These procedures are at their final draft stage and should be in place early 2002.

### **3.4 Education of Young People who are Looked After/Looked After and Accommodated:**

The Authority has responded to the findings of a Joint Social Work/Education Report "Learning with Care". The contents of the response to this document are subject to a separate report to Committee detailing a range of measures the Authority will be required to initiate in order to meet the recommendations contained within the document "Learning with Care". The developments will require effective partnership between Social Work and Education in order to enhance the educational prospects of young people for whom the Authority has responsibility.

- The Scottish Executive will provide a one-off injection of monies to each Local Authority to support and enhance the educational opportunities available to young people who are looked after/looked after and accommodated.
- The Looked After and Accommodated Education/Social Work Standing Group continues to meet on a regular basis and will continue to develop a joint training agenda, recommend development initiatives while monitoring and evaluating young peoples educational performance.
- As part of the implementation of the Member/Officer Group recommendations, North Lanarkshire has already introduced a number of education based initiatives within the children's units.

### **3.5 Lanarkshire Integrated Youth health Project:**

This Health Board initiative which will offer a service to young people in both North and South Lanarkshire is subject to a separate report to Committee.

- The service which will be fully operational and staffed by December 2001 will, as part of its remit, provide a service to young people accommodated within North Lanarkshire. The project workers will deliver a service to vulnerable young people on a range of health related issues. It is anticipated that young people in our residential child care units will benefit from specialist support in relation to sexual health, drugs, alcohol, diet and self harm issues. These are significant areas of concern in the respect of accommodated young people.

### **3.6 Improvements to Physical Environments:**

- A programme of improvements to the physical environment of the Residential Child Care Units is progressing. A number of the Authority's different Departments have contributed to improving the environment both in and around young persons units. Closer working relationships are developing across Departments and regular monitoring meetings continue to take place.
- Partnership working is improving response times and providing a better co-ordinated response to repairs and maintenance issues.
- Significant building work has begun at Torrance Avenue Children's Unit in Airdrie to redesign and replace the kitchen/dining area on the ground floor, including Health and Safety issues.
- The introduction of CCTV monitoring systems in each unit has helped to ensure the safety of staff and young people as well as the protection of property. The incidence of

vandalism and general disturbance around the area of the children's units as a result of this initiative has decreased. New legislation has been introduced in respect of CCTV's and the effect on practice will need to be reviewed.

- Mitchell Street Children's Unit in Airdrie has identified the upgrading and development of their garden area as a priority. Work will begin early in the new year on this project which will not only enhance the life of the young people but will enhance the environment for the local community. Some of the young people in this unit contribute to garden maintenance.

### 3.7 **Care Planning/Packages of Care:**

The recent Departmental restructuring exercise has provided a clearer structure for the support of vulnerable young people in the residential child care establishments. The role of Senior Child Care Officers, who externally manage the residential units, continues to develop enabling a greater focus on standards and practice.

### 3.8 **Staffing:**

The Member/Officer Group requested that consideration be given to regrading of staff to assist with the recruitment and retention. The Social Services Council and the introduction of the Regulation of Care Standards will introduce qualification standards for residential care staff. SIRCC has committed to the Authority and can initiate a rolling programme of staff development and training in conjunction with the department's training section. SIRCC, however, remain unable to provide a definitive statement as to gradings likely to be recommended by the Commission, however, their commitment to the Authority's training programme will ensure that it remains at the forefront of developments of this nature.

## 4. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Committee is asked to:

- (i) Note progress on implementing the proposals from the Member Officer Working Group.
- (ii) Request the Director of Social Work to provide reports to Committee on the progress of Section 3 of the report.
- (iii) Otherwise note the contents of the report.



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**Director of Social Work**  
**December 2001**

*For further information on this report please contact Mary Fegan, Head of Social Work Services, TEL: (01698 332004)*