

To: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE		Subject: JOINT HMI/SWSI REPORT ON THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER AWAY FROM HOME – “LEARNING WITH CARE”
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		
Date: 20 December 2001	Ref: JB/JH	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT / INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 To advise Committee on the Joint HMI/SWSI Report on the Education of Children Looked After Away from Home/”Learning with Care”, and to note the recommendations contained within the report.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Joint HMI/SWSI Inspection Team reviewed the educational attainment of young people looked after by Local Authorities and the measures taken to support their educational attainment.
- 2.2 The report highlighted the poor performance of young people within the education system who are looked after by Local Authorities and made a series of recommendations designed to enhance the educational prospects of vulnerable young people.

3. PROPOSALS / RECOMMENDATIONS

The Chief Executive replied to the Scottish Executive in October 2001 detailing the Authority’s position with regard to the nine recommendations contained within the report.

Recommendations 1 and 2: Assessment, Care Planning and Review

These recommendations required the Authority to further develop its care planning strategy for young people who are looked after and accommodated. North Lanarkshire Council will ensure that care planning for young people is undertaken with reference to best practice and conducted with regard to nationally agreed standards.

- The Authority is committed to care planning for all young people for whom it has responsibility using a standard format, including all information stored, as part of the Modernising Government Agenda.
- The Child Care Best Value Group will undertake to review all child care proformas, data storage and the Social Work Information System (SWIS) Assessment and Care Management Module by April 2002.
- Every young person accommodated by North Lanarkshire Council will have, on admission, statutory care plans in place. These initial care plans will make reference to the educational needs of the young person who has been accommodated. It is recognised, however, that due to

the unplanned nature of some admissions, they may not necessarily have been constructed following discussion with Educational Personnel.

- Subsequent Child Care Reviews, conducted in line with Best Practice, will ensure that the educational needs for every young person is fully considered. In each case Educational Personnel will be invited to complete the Department's looked after and accommodated school report which would assist in the formulation of an educational care plan. Appropriate Education staff will be invited to every Child in Care Review as part of the process of monitoring, constructing and supporting educational placements.
- Regular and purposeful contact should be maintained between Social Work and Education staff for each young person who is in the Authority's care.
- Every young person in the Authority's care will have an individual education plan.
- Every young person accommodated by the Authority will have their educational needs fully discussed and have access to full time education.
- Recognition was given to the need for the development of a training package for residential staff, foster carers and adoptive parents as to how to support the educational needs of young people in their care.

Recommendation 3: Attendance Arrangements

The Authority recognises that currently it is extremely difficult to track the educational placement and progress of young people who are looked after and accommodated. The Authority, therefore, is committed to the exchange of information between the Education Department's SEEMIS IT System and the Social Work Department's SWIS System in order to address this issue. North Lanarkshire Council is currently exploring with the City of Glasgow Council the option of utilising technology they already have in place which would allow the secure exchange of information between departments. Linking the two IT systems will incur a small cost to the Authority in the region of £10,000 and discussions with Education regarding this one off cost are ongoing.

Recommendation 4: Progress, Attainment and Support for Learning

North Lanarkshire Council has initiated a system in all Secondary and Primary schools where a dedicated member of the Management Team will have responsibility for the support, guidance and monitoring of young people who are looked after and accommodated. Special education provisions and projects have their own particular arrangements which, due to the needs of young people with whom they work, are both sophisticated and flexible. The Authority will make similar arrangements within the Pre-5 sector.

Recommendation 5: Working in Partnership

This recommendation calls for the joint professional development of Education, Social Work staff and carers to ensure that they are able to contribute effectively towards the implementation of an integrated policy ensuring that the educational needs of looked after children are met. Officers from North Lanarkshire Council who are members of the Joint Education/Social Work Looked After and Accommodated Standing Committee are considering a number of initiatives in light of this recommendation which will be based on Best Practice, identify service gaps and monitor future developments.

Recommendation 6: Carers Support for Learning

The Authority reaffirmed its commitment to the involvement of parents and carers in the process of review and support for young people's education who are accommodated.

Recommendation 7: Carers Support for Learning

North Lanarkshire Council is committed to providing "Educationally Rich Environments" for all young people who are looked after and accommodated.

- North Lanarkshire Council Social Work Department has currently engaged the Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care (SIRCC) to assist with the construction of individual unit development plans as well as an overall corporate residential child care strategy. Within this task is a need to look at staff development and training issues including inter-agency support mechanisms. Part of the process will involve a detailed review of the support mechanisms necessary for the development of initiatives to support the educational needs of young people accommodated in the Authority.
- The Authority is committed to providing "Educationally Rich Environments" in each of its children's units. Each children's unit will develop designated space which will offer young people privacy and comfort for one to one tuition and private study. These rooms will be appropriately resourced and furnished in conjunction with the young people. Each children's unit will have access to a PC with appropriate educational support software and controlled Internet access.
- Residential child care staff following a joint training programme, will continue to offer practical help, advice and support with homework and encourage young people to attend school. The Authority is committed to recognising, in a positive way, those young people who attend and achieve within the education environment.
- North Lanarkshire will continue to encourage a positive ethos and staff commitment to supporting young people in education as part of its inclusiveness agenda.

Examples of Good Practice:

North Lanarkshire provided the Executive with examples of current good practice within the Authority.

- (a) Member/Officer Working Party on Residential Child Care.
- (b) The work currently being undertaken by SIRCC in relation to unit developments and the corporate strategy.
- (c) The education of accommodated and looked after children's project. This project has been supported by the Social Inclusion fund in the Council and has been operating for 9 months, since March 2001. A review of this project is currently underway.

A teacher was appointed to co-ordinate the personal learning plans for individual accommodated children. The project focuses on literacy and achievement skills of a target group of individual children and young people currently looked after and accommodated both within the children's units and foster families.

- (d) **Berryhill Primary School, Craigneuk, Lanarkshire** – a Joint Social Work/Education Initiative is underway within the above named establishment. It is currently developing ways of supporting, exchanging information and planning for young people who are looked after and accommodated who attend Primary school. The project involves carers, parents, classroom teachers, case managers and pupils.

Recommendation 8: Policies, Management and Quality Assurance

North Lanarkshire Council's Children's Services Plan currently reflects the national social justice targets for children and young people. It will explicitly consider the education of looked after and

accommodated children to ensure that the existing corporate approach is maintained and consolidated.

Recommendation 9: Policies, Management and Quality Assurance

North Lanarkshire Council is fully committed to the development of Management Information Systems which will facilitate the ability of various departments to track and monitor the educational attainment of young people in its care.

4. Additional Monies: 'Learning with Care' The Education of Children Looked After away from Home by Local Authorities

- 4.1 The Executive has, as a result of the "Learning with Care" report, allocated monies to each Local Authority to address the issues contained within. They will provide £500 per child looked after in a community placement and £2,500 for those looked after in Local Authority or independent homes, or in residential schools or secure accommodation. This monies will be a one off payment to be utilised to support the recommendations of the report. North Lanarkshire Council will attract a payment of some £464,000 which will be utilised for the education of vulnerable young people within the Authority.
- 4.2 Discussions have been arranged between the Chief Executives Office, Social Work and Education regarding proposals on the use of the money which require to be submitted to the Scottish Executive.
- 4.3 A report on the use of the money will be submitted to Policy and Resources Committee.

5. RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 Committee is asked to note the progress detailed in this report.
- 5.2 To request the Director of Social Work to provide further reports to Committee on the progress of each recommendation and support the recommendations contained within Section 3 of the report.
- 5.3 Otherwise note the contents of the report.



Jim Dickie
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December 2001

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

Background paper 'Learning with Care' is available in the Members Library