

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: 28 February 2002	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 Council's 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 Council's 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 to 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 is currently facilitating the construction of individual Unit Development Plans. The consultant, in conjunction with Unit Managers is analysing current functioning, considering the strengths and development points for each unit. Particular consideration is being 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 are being constructed in partnership with Unit Management Teams, Staff, Young People, Children's Rights Officer and "Who Cares?" staff.

- It is hoped that Individual Unit Development Plans will be completed by February 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, are consulting 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. The review will not be completed by SIRCC staff until March 2002 and therefore will be reported to Committee in May 2002.

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

- Community meetings continue to take place in Coatbridge and Cumbernauld in relation to Cecil Street and Pine Court Children's Units respectively. The next community meeting with regard to Cecil Street Children's Unit will be held at the Social Work Area Office, Bank Street, Coatbridge on 13 March 2002 at 7.00 p.m. The next meeting in relation to Pine Court will be on 7 February 2002 at 7.30 p.m. in the Social Work Area Office, Carron House, Town Centre, Cumbernauld.

Senior Social Work officials are in discussion with relevant Elected Members with regard to confirming similar community meetings in Airdrie and Motherwell in relation to Torrance Avenue, Mitchell Street and Leslie Street Children's Units.

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 communities 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 20 Community Police Officers and 20 staff from North Lanarkshire Children's Units will take place in Airdrie on the 13<sup>th</sup> March 2002. The training day will provide a Forum for sharing and developing common practice issues such as:-
  - Procedures in relation to Missing Young People.
  - How effective Community Policing can support young people in Residential Child Care.
  - Drugs, Alcohol and violence. Strategies for managing difficult behaviour within Residential Child Care.
  - The Scottish Child Care Legislation Framework and the support of vulnerable young people.
- 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, allowing for consultation, will be in place by summer 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 developments will require effective partnerships between Social Work and Education in order to enhance the educational prospects of young people for whom the Authority has responsibility.

- The Scottish Executive has provided 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. North Lanarkshire received £523,000 as a one off payment. 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. A small team of Education Department/Social Work officers are currently exploring options for the best use of these monies. It is expected that each Young Person's Unit will benefit directly with monies being provided to support the development of study facilities with appropriate education materials.
- 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 people's educational performance.

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

This Health Board initiative will offer a service to young people in both North and South Lanarkshire.

- The service became fully operational and staffed in December 2001 and 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 respect of accommodated young people. Social Work officials meet regularly with Health Board staff ensuring targeted service delivery to meet the needs of Young People in care.

#### 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. Each unit has weekly meetings between staff and young people at which issues in relation to the fabric of the building and vandalism are discussed and actioned.
- Significant building work is complete at Torrance Avenue Children's Unit in Airdrie. A major redesign of the kitchen/dining area on the ground floor to meet Health and Safety standards has been undertaken. Re-decoration of bedrooms is currently ongoing.
- Cecil Street Children's Unit in Coatbridge has now had essential work to the exterior fabric of the building completed and a re-development of the toilet/bathing facilities is programmed. Significant internal decoration work to common areas and bedrooms is now complete.
- A major refurbishment programme for Pine Court Children's Unit in Cumbernauld is now complete. Young People and staff have responded positively to the enhanced living environment. The level of vandalism and damage within the unit had decreased.
- Leslie Street Children's Unit in Motherwell, being the newest Unit, required least upgrading. However, the identified priority areas will be refurbished by the end of the financial year.
- 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 spring of 2002 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 will contribute to garden maintenance. This unit will also have a refurbishment of its 'independent living' accommodation and to date has had significant redecoration of common areas as well as bedrooms completed.
- 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.

### 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. Meetings take place every 4 weeks between the SCCO's and the Child Care Co-ordinator based at Social Work Headquarters in order to monitor, review and develop practice and standards throughout the Authority. Children's Unit Managers and external managers also meet every 4 weeks with the Co-ordinator Child Care to address operational issues, discuss developments and action practice issues.

The services purchased from Includem for "looked after and accommodated young people" are used to capacity and have been successful in providing additional supports to vulnerable young people.

### 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. The Executive review, in conjunction with SIRCC and the new Social Services Council, of staffing issues in Residential Child Care will also make recommendation with regard to the pay and conditions of staff who already hold a recognised qualification. A separate report to committee will be provided in May 2002 in relation to this matter.

Arrangements remain in place to provide additional staffing supports to units to cover training and crisis where necessary.

## 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 3.8 of the report.
- (iii) Otherwise note the contents of the report.



**Jim Dickie**  
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**February 2002**

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