

To: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE		Subject: STUDY VISIT TO NORTH LANARKSHIRE FOR SENIOR OFFICIALS AND PRACTITIONERS FROM SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		
Date: 9 MAY 2002	Ref: JD/SD/JM	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT / INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 To inform committee of a proposed Study Visit to North Lanarkshire by Senior Officials and Child Care Practitioners from the former Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) and to agree the provision of support by North Lanarkshire Council Social Work Department.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Yugoslavia had a system of Centres for Social Work dating from the 1960s that were models of excellence in the Balkans. These 134 centres undertook a wide range of social work and social security tasks with a reputation for professionalism and efficiency.
- 2.2 The war which began in 1990 has radically changed the situation and the Centres for Social Work are now under resourced and scarcely operational. They are no longer able to discharge their guardianship functions and are unable to protect children.
- 2.3 The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection in Belgrade and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare in Podgorica in Montenegro are trying to undertake reform of social protection arrangements but lack the expertise required.
- 2.4 UNICEF considers the most effective way to protect vulnerable children is to invest in rebuilding the capacity of the Centres for Social Work.
- 2.5 UNICEF has agreed to fund two related initiatives – the Social Protection Project in Serbia and the Transformation and Deinstitutionalisation Project in Montenegro
- 2.6 Both projects work closely with the Ministry for Social Affairs in Serbia and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare in Montenegro in helping them
- to switch emphasis from care of children in institutions to care of children in families
 - to develop community based preventative services as alternatives to institutions
 - to invest resources in supporting vulnerable families
- 2.7 Central to both projects is the review and planning for 1000 children living in the 9 Institutions for Children Without Parental Care, with careful plans made to maximise integration into family life, with birth parents, foster parents or national adoption.

3. PROPOSALS / CONSIDERATIONS

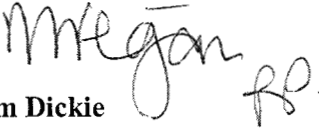
- 3.1. The Social Protection and the Transformation and Deinstitutionalisation Projects view a study visit as a core component of the process of capacity building of the Centres for Social Work.
- 3.2. Government Ministers, Directors of Centres for Social Work and Institutions for Children and Social Work Practitioners will be involved in the visit giving them an opportunity to see how child protection operates in the United Kingdom, delivered by Social Work Departments as part of state responsibilities.
- 3.3. The study visit will take place for one week from 17 June 2002.
- 3.4. There are is range of anticipated outcomes from the visit. These include observation of;
 - the design management and organisation of social work services to children and families
 - a Scottish Local Authority committee system and the responsibilities of elected members in child protection and interdisciplinary multi-agency work.
 - the Children's Hearing System
 - a wide range of foster care
 - systems for assessing need and the care management process

4. FINANCIAL / PERSONNEL / LEGAL / POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. North Lanarkshire has previously participated in study visits for visitors from Russia and Spain.
- 4.2. The fourth largest Authority in Scotland, North Lanarkshire is in a strong position to encourage observation of their child protection and family support systems.
- 4.3. A programme for the visit will reflect much of the good practice in the Authority to retain children safely at home and also the innovative practice with young people with special needs such as transitional planning and supported employment.
- 4.4. The study visit will last for one week and will involve Elected Members and Officers of the Council..
- 4.5. The Social Work Department will assist with practical arrangements such as accommodation and transport for the duration of the study visit.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1. Committee is requested to:
 - (i) approve the involvement of North Lanarkshire in the study visit
 - (ii) agree the Social Work Department should assist in the practical arrangements
 - (iii) otherwise note the contents of the report.


Jim Dickie
Director of Social Work
(15 April 2002)

(For further information on this report please contact Susan Devlin, Manager, Children and Families and Criminal Justice on Tel: (01698 332032)