

AGENDA ITEM No. 29

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: 9 MAY 2002	Ref: JB/AC

## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT / INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. To advise Committee

- (i) of the ongoing activity being undertaken to improve the quality of the Council's residential child care sector.
- (ii) of the findings of the Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care (SIRCC) Report on Children's Units owned and managed by North Lanarkshire Council.
- (iii) to seek approval for the recommendations contained within the Committee 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 24<sup>th</sup> May 2001. The report 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 care provided within a quality residential setting would remain a first option.
- 2.2 The Council entered into a Partnership arrangement with the Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care to review and make recommendations regarding the Council's residential child care provision. The Centre was set up by the Scottish Executive to be a 'Centre of Excellence' in the area of residential child care in Scotland.
- 2.3 A copy of the Executive Summary of the SIRCC report is attached as an appendix to this report. Copies of the full report have been placed in the members library.

## 3. PROPOSALS / CONSIDERATIONS

### 3.1 Partnerships with Health

- 3.1.1 Lanarkshire Health Board is currently undertaking a strategic review of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric services across Lanarkshire. Officers from both North and South Lanarkshire Council are involved in the review process. A core component of this review is the need for service development relating to looked after and accommodated young people in line with nationally identified priorities. Currently child and adolescent psychiatric services are characterised by recruitment difficulty and by long waiting times for psychiatric and psychological support. The service review will seek to alter this position in order to meet national targets for the support of vulnerable young people.

- 3.1.2 The Lanarkshire wide Peer Education Project in conjunction with the expanded 'Rushes' initiative will support, as a priority, looked after and accommodated young people by targeting their resources to address issues in relation to alcohol and drug misuse.
- 3.1.3 Nationally it is reported that a number of young people who have experienced residential child care subsequently suffer from mental health difficulties in adult life. Young people are at higher risk of attempted actual suicide and can be found in the prison and homeless populations.
- 3.1.4 In partnership with Health colleagues a review of discharge procedures from Accident and Emergency services is being progressed. The procedures are being reviewed in order to effectively support the discharge and after care of vulnerable young people including those who are looked after and accommodated. Issues in relation to self harm, mental health, sexual health and drug and alcohol misuse remain at the forefront of the Health agenda.

### **3.2 Education of Young People Who Are Looked After and Accommodated**

- 3.2.1 A small team of officers from Social Work and Education are progressing the use of £523,000 provided as a one-off payment by the Scottish Executive to promote the educational attainment of looked after and accommodated young people. The monies made available have been utilised to provide a range of support materials and equipment for each of the Authority's five children's units. This will allow the development of educational support bases within each unit with the facility for private study, secure internet access, reference material and direct educational support as required.
- 3.2.2 The E.L.A.C Project (Education of Looked After Children Project) is being expanded in order to offer appropriate support to Looked after and accommodated young people in line with the Executive's targets for educational achievement. An additional full time teaching post will be established by Education providing direct support to young people in residential and foster care as well as advice and guidance to staff and carers.
- 3.2.3 A resource base is being developed in the former Pentland School building in Chryston. The base will hold a range of educational support materials and equipment, which can be accessed, on a loan basis, by residential staff, foster parents or other appropriate local authority staff.
- 3.2.4 The Authority has purchased 250 licenses for the 'SuccessMaker' educational support package. This IT package offers appropriate individualised support for young people to be delivered in a variety of settings. This will allow young people in residential units to utilise the package via secure internet access. They will be supported by residential staff and carers for whom training will be provided.
- 3.2.5 North Lanarkshire Council currently has 48 young people attending residential schools. Each school has received £2,500 per pupil to support their education.
- 3.2.6 North Lanarkshire schools will receive additional resources to provide support for pupils who are looked after and accommodated and attend mainstream education.
- 3.2.7 £12,500 of the Educational Attainment monies has been utilised to fund, stage 1 of a two stage process, the integration of the SEEMIS (Education Department IT System) and the SWIS (Social Work Information System). This will allow officers from both Departments to track the attendance and attainment of Looked After and Accommodated young people.
- 3.2.8 Training in relation to the recommendations contained within the report produced by the Discipline Task Force was provided in partnership with Education for Head Teachers and a number of Social Work Officers. The training provided a joint understanding of the issues regarding dealing with disruptive young people within an educational setting.
- 3.2.8 The Social Work and Education staff are committed to a conference/training event delivered by the National Literacy Association and Who Cares? England for a number of Education and Social Work staff as well as foster parents. The training will focus on how to support education and literacy needs of looked after and accommodated young people. Consideration is being given to joint work and training in relation to self-advocacy and efficacy.
- 3.2.9 The Yew Project offers support for Young People who are looked after and accommodated with any health related issues. The project offers advice, guidance and direct input with issues such as sexual health, self harm, drugs and alcohol, and healthy living.

### 3.3 Leisure

The Council will provide passes which will allow access to a range of leisure facilities across the authority for all young people who are currently looked after and accommodated. This will involve providing 54 passes for young people in residential child care units, as well as 47 family passes for foster carers. This initiative recognises the value in the constructive use of leisure time for young people in relation to stimulating life long interest, reducing unfocussed free time along with the related health benefits. This initiative is consistent with the Council's responsibilities within the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 as well as guidelines contained within the European Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### 3.4 Partnership with Strathclyde Police

3.4.1. A joint training day took place on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2002. The training day involved 23 Strathclyde Police Officers of varying rank and 25 residential child care staff including unit and external managers. The event focused on common practice issues and involved direct input from the police on:-

- 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

3.4.2 Direct input was provided by the Who Cares? Scotland and a former care user with regard to young people's views of the care process. Social Work officers provided direct input in relation to how the current legislative framework supports young people in care.

3.4.3 The event enhanced relationships and cemented links between liaison officers and children's units which were subject to review in previous committee reports. Feedback has been positive and further similar developments encouraged.

### 3.5 Neighbourhood Meetings

3.5.1 Activity within the Children's Units continues to be one of 'highs and lows'. This is similar to the circumstances of other non accommodated young people in their homes or communities. Periods of activity are balanced by quiet spells with staff working hard to ensure that the units are viewed positively within the community. Meetings continue on a regular basis in order to offer a forum for problem resolution as well as service review and development.

#### 3.5.2 Building Maintenance

A programme of building maintenance is ongoing in line with the Council's responsibility to provide care for young people with regard to National Standards. Improvements have been made to both the internal and external fabric of all five children's units. Young people are responding positively to the refurbishment programme ensuring that repair and maintenance issues are reduced. Difficulties have recently been identified in respect of timeous repairs. This is being pursued by relevant managers and it is hoped that proposed new structures will help address this.

### 3.6 Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care (SIRCC) – Report and Recommendations

3.6.1 As advised at previous Committees, SIRCC has now completed its review and submitted its report on the Council's Residential Child Care Units. A copy of the Executive Summary is attached as an appendix to this report. Copies of the full report have been placed in the Members Library.

- 3.6.2 In most respects the report notes issues already recognised by the Council as requiring further development and comments that these are not dissimilar to issues being experienced by almost every other local Authority in Scotland.
- 3.6.3 The report recommends that residential child care must be seen within the wider context of overall Council and Social Work Services for young people.
- 3.6.4 It is proposed that the reports recommendations be reviewed in the context of both the Children's Services Strategy Group (being reviewed to include nominated Conveners) and a new Member/Officer Group to consider the full spectrum of Social Work provision for young people at risk and to implement the reports recommendations where considered appropriate.

### 3.7 **Staffing**

- 3.7.1 As part of the recruitment and retention of quality, qualified basic grade residential care staff, Committee requested that consideration be given to increased financial rewards for staff who had a relevant qualification or to encourage staff to seek the same. It was acknowledged that this needed to be considered within the context of the job evaluation review underway within the Council, and the qualifications likely to be imposed by the Regulation of Care.
- 3.7.2 The Department's Personnel Section has proposed an arrangement which does not impact on job evaluation, or possible regulation requirements and which can be developed "in house".
- 3.7.3 Currently, a residential care yardstick "salary grade RW 12/28 is applicable to all residential employees, with progression through personal grades with the yard stick being dependent upon experience, training, attainment of qualifications and available resources.
- 3.7.4 It is proposed that the current yardstick be amended and extended within the current levels of experience and qualifications to be an aid in the recruitment and retention of employees within the discipline. Subject to Committee approval it is proposed that the Department proceed to implement these arrangements.
- 3.7.5 The Scottish Executive is not expected to report on the qualifications which will require to be held by the residential care workforce until after Social Work Committee, possibly June 2002.
- 3.7.6 Within a separate report to Committee, Training of Student Social Workers – Establishment of Social Work Entry Programme there are further recommendations proposed which if agreed and implemented will also enhance opportunities for the residential care workforce.

## 4. POLICY, PERSONNEL, FINANCIAL & LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The proposals are consistent with Council Policy, and it's legal responsibilities.
- 4.2 Financial considerations can be met from existing budgets.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Committee is asked to:

- (i) note the ongoing service developments in respect of the Council's Residential Child Care Sector
- (ii) note the contents of the SIRCC report
- (iii) agree the recommendations contained within sections 3.6.4 and 3.7.4 of the report
- (iv) request the Director of Social Work to provide further reports to Committee on the developments within the sector
- (v) the report be submitted to Education Committee regarding a full time teaching post
- (vi) otherwise note the contents of the report.

**Jim Dickie**  
**Director of Social Work**  
**13<sup>th</sup> April 2002**



*For further information on this report please contact Mary Fegan, Head of Social Work Services, Scott House, 73-77 Merry Street, Motherwell TEL: (01698 332100)*

## Executive Summary

The Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care (SIRCC) was invited by North Lanarkshire Council's Department of Social Work to undertake a review of residential child care facilities in the Council and to make recommendations for future development.

SIRCC approached this task with a clear view that residential child care is not a panacea for meeting the needs of all young people whose life circumstances dictate that they cannot live in the parental or substitute family care home. The residential child care staff have no magic wand that could remove all problems simply by admitting a young person to a unit.

The main activity carried out by the residential child care sector is the provision of accommodation for young people who are looked after. Each child or young person subject to residential care in North Lanarkshire has his or her own allocated case manager (social worker) who will provide regular updated care plans for each child or young person which will clearly set out their needs and action plan. These plans are subject to regular review and redesign as circumstances change. Residence can be based on statutory grounds following a decision by Children's Panel or on a voluntary basis within the provision of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

The former council, Strathclyde Region, brought the majority of the units into being with one unit having been established by North Lanarkshire. Six years after the creation of North Lanarkshire as a unitary authority it seems to be an appropriate time to consider reconfiguration of the sector. The residential child care sector has undergone major changes in the previous two decades and there has been a national concern about past practice in a number of units. SIRCC was created to assist with the training and qualification of workers and managers in residential child care and to offer consultancy where appropriate.

This report will offer opinions on the five children's units, their siting and what we believe they each could offer the young people who require to be accommodated by North Lanarkshire.

Staff selection, recruitment and training are three vital components of work to ensure a properly qualified workforce. All three have been addressed by two national groups: SIRCC (on staff qualifications) and the Scottish Recruitment and Selection Consortium. The SIRCC report on qualifications will be published in the foreseeable future. The Consortium's proposals on "Safer selection of social work staff who work with children" were published in 2001. The Consortium's work used as its basis the Skinner Report (1992), "Another Kind of Home" and the Cullen Report (1998), and the work is expected to have major implications for the Government's work on workforce regulation and

education. These latter issues are part of the Regulation of Care Act 2000 and we make reference to that and its implications as part of our report.

In the course of our work we have had assistance from all members of council staff we have been involved with. Having taken advice from a wide number of stakeholders and having made a number of visits to the units, we now offer the following recommendations.

- 1 We recommend that the SIRCC consultant be retained to complete the individual unit plans which require conclusion.
- 2 The future of residential child care services needs to be seen in the wider context of child care services as a whole. It is recommended that North Lanarkshire Council considers a wide review of children and families services.
- 3 SIRCC would view positively the development of neighbourhood / community meetings in order to provide an effective, positive and proactive forum for liaison and consultation. This would provide a forum for community consultation with regard to service development.
- 4 SIRCC recommends a review of the case management process with respect of young people looked after and accommodated. Consideration should be given to expanding and ensuring effective participation of residential staff in the process and a more robust role for Senior Child Care Officers (SCCO's) and headquarters' staff.
- 5 SIRCC recommends that the organisational structure for residential child care be reviewed. Best Practice nationally seems to indicate that a residential child care service is more effectively managed when there is central management as opposed to a devolved management.
- 6 Nationally recruitment and retention of qualified staff with residential child care is difficult. SIRCC recognises the efforts made by North Lanarkshire Social Work department to retain and recruit qualified and experienced staff at all levels. However SIRCC would recommend that the council continues robust arrangements to secure staff, with enhanced pay conditions.
- 7 SIRCC suggests, as a proposal for North Lanarkshire, the creation of a peripatetic staff team to fill gaps in individual units. This proposal could be thought of as being in line with best practice, and for later promulgation Nationally.
- 8 We recommend that referrals, where possible, should be planned and a policy should be in place for emergency admissions. A senior residential manager should be in a position to oversee this.
- 9 Where possible all admissions to residential child care units should be planned and a clear policy be in place for emergency admissions. A service manager should oversee the authorities admission and screening arrangements. SIRCC further recommends that the standard format paperwork (the L.A.C materials) be utilised throughout the authority, which we understand to be in line with executive guidelines.

- 10 Currently, North Lanarkshire has a policy of not admitting children under twelve to residential child care. SIRCC recommends that the current policy be reviewed to take account of exceptional circumstances when it is necessary for children under twelve to be in residential child care.
- 11 We recommend that a review of current arrangements for routine maintenance within children's units be considered. The authority may wish to consider devolving budgets to individual establishments to make use of more localised services.
- 12 SIRCC strongly recommends that the future use of Pine Court as a children's unit be reviewed as a matter of priority.
- 13 SIRCC also strongly recommends that the future use of Cecil Street as a children's unit be reviewed with equal priority.
- 14 SIRCC recommends that, in line with recently issued National Standards, the capacity of Mitchell Street Children's Unit be reviewed.
- 15 SIRCC recommends that the role of each of the five children's units be reviewed within a framework which would provide scope to undertake specialist functions. Specific consideration should be given to the needs of the adolescents, young women, younger children, assessment, short stay and throughcare.
- 16 We recommend a review of care and control arrangements with a particular emphasis on a more robust application of health and safety procedures. This should be accompanied by more appropriate training.
- 17 SIRCC would recommend that a skills audit be undertaken among residential child care staff and that, while recognising current national recruitment difficulties, gaps in skills be highlighted for recruitment.