

To: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE		Subject: MEMBER/OFFICER GROUP CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		
Date: 19 DECEMBER 2002	Ref: JB/AC	

## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT / INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. To advise Committee of the ongoing activity being undertaken to improve the quality of the Council's Residential Child Care Services and to advise of progress of the Member/Officer Working Group on Social Work Services for children and their families.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This report provides information on the actions taken to continue to improve Residential Child Care as well as an overview of the progress of the Member/Officer group currently reviewing Social Work services to children and families across the authority.
- 2.2 This amalgamated report provides information previously presented in reports to Committee on progress on the review and development of North Lanarkshire Child Care services and the new progress report on the work of the Member/Officer group reviewing Social Work services to children and families.

## 3. PROPOSALS / CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1. **Member/Officer Group – Children's Services**  
Social Work Committee of 9 May 2002 established a Member/Officer group to consider Children's Services within the Authority. The group chaired by the Convenor of the Social Work has, to date, met on several occasions and plans to make a full report to Committee in February 2003.
- 3.2. The Head of Social Work Services made a presentation to the initial meeting outlining the key priorities for Children and Families Service provision as they relate to the Authorities priorities. A tiered approach to service provision was the main theme of the presentation which focused on universal services, early intervention and equality issues. Effective targeting, screening, accountability and direct intervention services formed the focus of discussion.
- 3.3. Subsequent meetings of the Member/Officer Group reviewed community and residential supports. Senior Officers presented an overview of current service provision and planned developments. The challenges faced by children and families services were reviewed and a commitment exists to provide a report and recommendations to Committee early 2003.

- 3.4. In view of the size of the Children and Family agenda the member/officer group has agreed to prioritise a number of areas for consideration by the group, with other matters being referred to Children's Services Strategy Group and the Child Protection Committee.

#### **4. Residential and Child Care Services**

##### **4.1 Education of Young People who are Looked After and Accommodated**

North Lanarkshire Social Work and Education Departments in partnership with British Telecom and Microsoft are one of 3 Authorities piloting the 'Virtual School Bag'. The initiative offers the potential to develop on-line workbooks and personal plans and should lead to greater integration of service to meet children's needs as well as sharing information. The Minister for Education and Young People launched the project on 26 November 2002. The project will provide educational software and controlled Internet access for young people in children's units and foster families. The pilot will be evaluated by Local Authority officers as well as B.T. and Microsoft staff.

- 4.2 In conjunction with the 'Virtual School Bag' project 'Successmaker' software purchased by the Education Department to support all young people's learning will be provided to Looked After and Accommodated children in residential units as well as some foster families.

- 4.3 Two additional teachers are now in post to support the educational needs of Looked After and Accommodated young people. The teachers will provide enhanced educational support to young people living in the Authority's children's units and with foster families. The support provided will involve individual tutoring, assistance with homework, IT skills as well as providing links with mainstream schools and colleges.

- 4.4 These developments will assist the Council meet its statutory responsibilities as well as complying with recent Scottish Executive policy in respect of the education of children who are looked after and accommodated.

##### **4.5 Partnerships with Housing**

Officers from the Children and Families Team have been involved with the Housing Department to develop a Homeless Strategy. Young People leaving care should be viewed as a priority within the strategy ensuring the provision of appropriate accommodation and support to prevent homelessness.

- 4.6 New Case Managers have been appointed by the Housing Department to assess and support the needs of vulnerable people preventing homelessness. New protocols are being developed between Housing and Social Work in line with a commitment to provide better integrated working which will ensure enhanced support for vulnerable young people at risk of becoming homeless.

##### **4.7 Partnerships with Strathclyde Police**

Positive relationships continue with the Community Safety branch of Strathclyde Police. Local arrangements have been developed for liaison, support and information exchange to support vulnerable young people living in the children's units and the community.

##### **4.8 Partnerships with Health**

Lanarkshire Health Board have created eight new Clinicians posts within the Child and Adolescent Community Psychiatric teams. The new posts will enhance the service provided to young people, including those living in children's units and foster families, experiencing emotional and mental health difficulties. New policies and procedures are being developed which will allow information sharing, intervention strategies, assessment and targeting of resources for this group of young people.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Committee is asked to :-

- (i) note the information provided
- (ii) note that the Member/Officer Review of Children's Services will provide future updates to Social Work Committee.
- (iii) Otherwise note the content of the report



**Jim Dickie**

**Director of Social Work**

**25<sup>th</sup> November 2002**

*For further information on this report please contact John Butcher, Co-ordinator Children & Families, Dalziel Workspace, Motherwell TEL: (01698 33265)*