

To: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE		Subject: REPORT OF THE MEMBER/OFFICER GROUP ON SOCIAL WORK CHILDREN'S SERVICES IN NORTH LANARKSHIRE
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		
Date: 27 FEBRUARY 2003	Ref: JD/MF/JM	

## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT / INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. To advise Committee of the findings of, and to seek approval to progress the recommendations of the Member/Officer Group on Social Work Children's Services in North Lanarkshire.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. Social Work Committee of May 2002 agreed to establish a Member/Officer Group under the stewardship of the Convener of Social Work to review Social Work Children's Services in North Lanarkshire.
- 2.2. The group would build upon work previously undertaken by a Member/Officer Group on Children's Residential Services, recognising that to meet the needs of young people in residential care, a whole systems approach was required.
- 2.3. The remit of the Member/Officer Group is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 2.4. The Member/Officer Group noted the need to operate within legislative and policy requirements for the Council.
- 2.5. Legislative requirements include:
- The Children (Scotland) Act 1995
  - The Regulation of Care Act 2001
  - The European Convention on the Rights of the Child
- 2.6. In terms of policies, the key policy was "For Scotland's Children – Better Integrated Services" produced by the Executive in October 2001.
- 2.7. Overarching objectives considered by the Member/Officer Group included:
- Children's Services to be considered as a single service
  - Universal services should be designed to ensure inclusive access
  - Services should be targeted
  - The balance of care should be redressed
  - Retaining young people and children at home in their communities where it is safe to do so
  - Where young people and children require to be looked after and accommodated, this should be in quality provision, for the majority of young people in a family placement
  - Ensuring robust care planning arrangements are in place

2.8. In considering these objectives the group took account of current circumstances which included:

- Some inappropriate admissions to care
- Respite carers being used as foster placements (because of shortage of resources)
- Foster carers being used outwith agreed registration arrangements
- Absence of placement choice
- Drift in placements
- Residential units operating over capacity
- Intervention not being targeted
- An inability to recruit and retain necessary child care staff across all sectors

2.9. The group considered information from Council Officers, neighbours of residential units and an independent sector contract fostering service (carer and member of staff)

2.10. At an early stage, the group recognised that the scale of the child care sector was such that it would not be able to achieve its objectives within the required timescale, if all services and areas were to be addressed. It was agreed that the group would focus on key areas for intervention consistent with the approach of the Executive and are summarised as follows:

- Early Intervention
- Direct Intervention
- Intensive Intervention

2.11. The tiered approach recognises the following:

- Social Work is not a universal service and does not offer preventative services, which are the remit of universal services such as education, health and community services
- The Department requires to adopt a tiered approach as detailed in section 2.10 above
- Families and young people following assessment should receive the right service at the right time

2.12. Throughout all of its deliberations, the group was alert to the national difficulties being experienced in recruiting and retaining qualified / experienced staff across all child care sectors.

### **3. PROPOSALS / CONSIDERATIONS**

3.1. The group agreed to target key areas for intervention, those areas which are most likely to have associated impact on young people and children at risk. These are summarised in Appendix 2 of the report.

3.2. The majority of areas identified address a review of processes or a more effective use of existing resources.

3.3. The introduction of gatekeeping mechanisms has started to address the numbers of young people requiring to be looked after and accommodated. It was however recognised that with these arrangements there was a tension to ensure that young people were not placed at inappropriate risk by remaining at home.

3.4. Three significant developments proposed are:

- The Need to explore opportunities to develop a fee / contract based family placement scheme
- A Review and reconfiguration of existing residential resources, including progressing two new purpose built residential units
- To pilot a family centre type model within North Lanarkshire

3.5. These proposals recognise the need to improve and enhance the range of provision available to meet the often complex needs of those young people who cannot be safely cared for at home.

3.6. The pilot family centre will be a vehicle through which integrated services to children can be promoted.

#### **4. FINANCIAL / PERSONNEL / LEGAL / POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1. The proposals detailed in section 3 above will enable the Council to meet its obligations in terms of statute and Executive policy and facilitate compliance with national and regulatory requirements.

4.2. The three areas with potential significant financial and personnel implications are the proposals for the contract fostering scheme, the residential developments and the pilot family centre.

4.3. Funding sources will require to be identified/confirmed for these proposals as none could be wholly met from existing resources.

#### **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1. Committee is asked to:

- (i) give approval to progress the recommendations of the Member/Officer group on Social Work Children's Services in North Lanarkshire as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report.
- (ii) otherwise note the contents of the report.



**Jim Dickie**  
**Director of Social Work**  
**12 February 2003**

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**North Lanarkshire Council**

**Social Work**

**Remit of the Member/Officer Group on Social Work Children's Services in North Lanarkshire**

**Remit of the Member/Officer Group is:**

- To examine and make recommendations on the range of services for young people in North Lanarkshire.
- To be informed by best practice and make recommendations to ensure services are designed to meet individual needs.
- To be informed by the views, experiences and aspirations of service users and carers in determining future approaches to service delivery.
- To be informed by and progress the recommendations of "For Scotland's Children – Better Integrated Services - An Action Plan".
- To consider the most effective ways of progressing the corporate agenda as defined by the Children's (Scotland) Act 1995 to ensure that the Council fulfils its statutory responsibilities towards children and young people.
- To consider the findings of the Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care Report.
- To pay particular attention to having services in place which are part of a continuum care.
- To make recommendations for improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness residential and community based services provided or funded by North Lanarkshire Council and other relevant agencies.
- Ensure the arrangements are consistent with the recommendations of the Children's Services Strategy Group.

**North Lanarkshire Council**

**Social Work**

**Member/Officer Review of Social Work Children's Services – Summary Recommendations**

	<b>Aim</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
1.	Ensure robust assessment and care management procedures across children's services.	A Departmental Assessment and Care Management sub group to be established to include issues relating to children's services to ensure appropriate and targeted assessment of children's needs.
2.	Ensure proper monitoring of those children whose needs are identified to be best met away from home.	Establish a gatekeeping mechanism across the authority to ensure services are properly utilised to meet the needs of vulnerable young people and to support community based provision where appropriate.
3.	Ensure adequate multi agency arrangements are in place to avoid families in difficulty progressing into statutory systems.	Establish early intervention teams, which are multi- disciplinary in nature, in each of the three Social Work Divisions.
4.	Promote the integration of multi-agency preventative services in keeping with "For Scotland's Children – Better Integrated Services".	Consideration to be given to the development of the pilot family centre model within North Lanarkshire.
5.	To ensure that young people at risk, across North Lanarkshire, have equal access to standardised targeted groupwork provision.	Review and reconfigure the Departments Young Person's Support Units across the Authority.
6.	To ensure that a range of young people and children who have complex needs have access to a range of community based specialist services.	Continue to develop a range of community based credible interventions and programmes as alternatives to residential placements.

	<b>Aim</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
7.	To ensure that those young people whose needs cannot be met safely at home, have access to an alternative family placements where this will best meet their assessed needs.	Explore opportunities to develop a fee / contract based scheme family placement.
8.	To ensure that those young people whose needs can be best met in a residential unit have access to high quality care and provision.	Review and reconfigure existing residential resources, including progressing two new purpose built units.
9.	To ensure compliance with existing and new statutory responsibilities in respect of Throughcare services.	Establish Council arrangements to ensure full implementation of Throughcare service developments.
10.	To ensure that Children's Services Planning and Developing are integrated, and meet statutory and policy requirements such as "For Scotland's Children – Better Integrated Services"	Confirm and re-assert that the future planning, monitoring and review of Children's Services take place within the appropriate Council planning structures.
11.	To ensure that there are sufficient staff across all child care services with the necessary skills and qualifications to meet the complex and varied needs of children and young people in North Lanarkshire.	Continue to review recruitment and retention strategies, review conditions of service remuneration and take a lead role in the Executives workforce recruitment campaign.