

To: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE		Subject: STUDY VISIT TO NORTH LANARKSHIRE BY SENIOR OFFICIALS AND PRACTITIONER FROM SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		
Date: 28 AUGUST 2003	Ref: JD/AB	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT / INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This report aims to advise the Social Work Committee of some of the practical outcomes to the visit by Senior Officials and Practitioners from Serbia and Montenegro in October 2002.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. The war which began in Yugoslavia in 1990 radically changed Yugoslavia's social welfare system and their social work services are now severely under-resourced and scarcely operational. They are no longer able to discharge their guardianship functions and they are unable to protect children.
- 2.2. 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 they lack the expertise required.
- 2.3. UNICEF considers the most effective way protect to vulnerable children is to invest in rebuilding the capacity of the social work infrastructure.
- 2.4. UNICEF agreed to fund 2 related initiatives – a Social Protection Project in Serbia and the Transformation and De-institutionalisation Project in Montenegro. In order to give effect to these initiatives Government Ministers, Directors of Centres for Social Work and institutions for children and Social Work Practitioners were involved in the visit to give them an opportunity to see how child protection operates in Scotland, delivered by Social Work as part of their states' responsibilities.
- 2.5. The study visit took place in October 2002.
- 2.6. Earlier this year UNICEF reviewed the practical outcomes of the visit to North Lanarkshire by the Serbian and Montenegrin delegations. The following are some of the ways in which the experiences and observations made by the visitors in North Lanarkshire have been able to be used on their return to their home countries.
- UNICEF have described the results of the Study Visit as dramatic, tangible and sustainable
 - The governor of a residential facility for young people involved in offending has developed a proposal for new services to help to re-integrate young people back into the community following a period of custody. North Lanarkshire's throughcare and assessment services provide examples which are being considered as models.

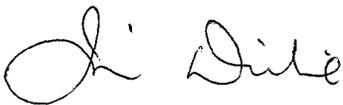
- All the visitors were struck by the commitment to non-institutional options e.g. family-based care and community-based services which are the core of our services to children in North Lanarkshire. These approaches were the theme of a conference in the town of Kragijevac, a town blighted by unemployment following closure of the local steel industry.
- Serbia's Ministry of Social Affairs which has responsibility for Social Work has authorised 2 new pilot projects – The Reform of Standards in the Social Care Sector and the Development of Foster Care, both of which initiatives have been heavily influenced by the experience of the study visit with 2 Senior Members of the Ministry present.
- A Foster Care Scheme has now been implemented in Kragijevac and steps have been taken to refurbish and de-institutionalise residential children's homes in area.
- Services for children with special needs in North Lanarkshire made a profound impact on the visitors. They were particularly impressed by the facilities which they saw at Mavisbank School and with the need for pre-school and post-school provision.
- The experience of services for children with special needs in North Lanarkshire has been communicated to parents of children with learning disabilities in order to raise their awareness and aspirations for their children.
- One of the visitors was inspired to organise a local campaign to establish a social facility for children from dysfunctional families.
- A senior psychologist in the delegation went back to Serbia with the enthusiasm and determination to establish a respite care service (for children with special needs) which has now come to fruition. Experience both of the senior psychologist and the Government Minister on the delegation during their visit to North Lanarkshire underpinned their commitment to this development.
- The senior psychologist has also during the visit gained understanding and experience of how children with special needs might be integrated into mainstream education with special support. On his return he has been able to make changes in the processes to ensure that parents are involved in consultation and decision-making about services for their children.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 It is clear that the delegations from Serbia and Montenegro had a very positive experience during their visit to North Lanarkshire and have been able to put their learning to productive use on return to their countries.
- 3.2 North Lanarkshire Council in committing to this initiative has enhanced its reputation in international terms, both for the quality of its services and for its preparedness to reach out to help emerging countries in improving their provision.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Social Work Committee is requested to note the content of the report.



Jim Dickie
Director of Social Work
31 July 2003

For further information on this report please contact Jim Dickie, Director of Social Work TEL: (01698 332011)