

To: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE	Subject: MODERNISATION OF CHILDREN'S HOMES IN NORTH LANARKSHIRE	
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		
Date: 30 OCTOBER 2003	Ref: dm/modch	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT / INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This report seeks approval for plans to modernise the provision of care for children and young people who need to be looked after and accommodated in a residential setting in North Lanarkshire.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. Local authorities have a legal responsibility under the terms of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 to accommodate children and young people who, for reasons of care and/or protection, are no longer able to live safely at home. This, together with a number of key policy initiatives, place a corporate parenting responsibility for looked after and accommodated children and young people on North Lanarkshire Council.
- 2.2. Whilst the overwhelming majority of care is provided in the young person's own home or a family setting, for a small number this is provided in a residential setting. Current provision consists of 48 places, none of which is smaller than 7 places. There are major issues concerning size; design; location; management and staffing. Existing services fall short of standards applied by the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care.
- 2.3. In a local context, the North Lanarkshire Children's Services Plan 2002 – 2005 sets out an objective to reduce the number of children who need to be accommodated in a residential setting. The report of a subsequent Member/Officer review of Children's Services recommended the "review and reconfiguration of existing residential services, including progressing two new purpose built units" (to replace Cecil Street in Coatbridge and Pine Court in Cumbernauld). This was approved by Social Work Committee in February 2003.

3. PROPOSALS / CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1. The objectives of the plan are:

- To progressively create more community based alternatives
- To reduce the number of residential care home places
- To build two new homes to high quality design specifications
- To reconfigure existing provision so achieving, over time, a position whereby no home provided will exceed six places and a more appropriate geographical spread of services across North Lanarkshire.

3.2. Appendix 1 provides a summary report which contains more detail on the proposals. It describes the options appraisal process undertaken, the site identification exercise, and the benefits criteria applied to each potential site. The outcome of the process has informed the following recommendations:

- **Phase 1** - The proposed replacement of Cecil Street with a five bedded unit at the vacant former respite care unit at Buchanan Street, Coatbridge.
- **Phase 2** -The relocation of day services currently provided on the Kirknowe site in Wishaw to Cecil Street and the creation of a new purpose built six bedded unit at Kirknowe.
- **Phase 3** - A proposed new build six bedded children's home to be built on a site in Cumbernauld to replace Pine Court. At the time of writing, analysis of the site options has not been concluded.
- **Phase 4** - Future plans to reconfigure remaining provision in keeping with the principles and approach set out in this document.

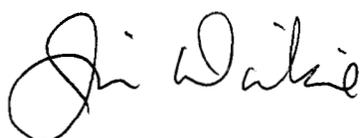
4. FINANCIAL / PERSONNEL / LEGAL / POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1. The cost of the proposed developments has been set aside in the Council's capital plan for Social Work.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Committee is asked to:

- (i) agree the proposals contained within this report to modernise children's homes in North Lanarkshire; and
- (ii) otherwise note the contents of this report



Jim Dickie
Director of Social Work
21 October 2003

For further information on this report please contact Duncan Mackay, Head of Social Work Development TEL: (01698 332003) or Mary Fegan, Head of Social Work Services TEL: (0698 332004)

SUMMARY REPORT

MODERNISATION OF CHILDREN'S HOMES IN NORTH LANARKSHIRE



1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report sets out plans to modernise the provision of care for children and young people who need to be looked after and accommodated in a residential setting in North Lanarkshire.

2. CONTEXT

- 2.1 Local authorities have a legal responsibility under the terms of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 to accommodate children and young people who, for reasons of care and/or protection, are no longer able to live safely at home. There are also a number of key Scottish Executive policies, most recently "For Scotland's Children – Better Integrated Services" (October 2001). Taken together, these legislative and policy imperatives place a corporate parenting responsibility for looked after and accommodated children and young people on North Lanarkshire Council.
- 2.2 For the majority of young people in contact with Social Work, care is provided in the young person's own home or in a family setting. For a small number, this is provided in a residential setting. In practice the Council is obliged to care for and accommodate some of the most vulnerable children and young people in our communities. Where care is provided in a residential setting, it must comply with national care standards regulated by the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care.
- 2.3 In a local context, the North Lanarkshire Children's Services Plan 2002 – 2005 sets out an objective to reduce the number of children who need to be accommodated in a residential setting. The report of a subsequent Member/Officer review of Children's Services recommended the "review and reconfiguration of existing residential services, including progressing two new purpose built units" (to replace Cecil Street and Pine Court). This was approved by Social Work Committee in February 2003.

3. CURRENT PROVISION

- 3.1 North Lanarkshire Council operates five residential units for children and young people, with a registered capacity of 48 places, as set out in Table 1 (below). Much of the existing provision is not fit for purpose and falls short of national care standards. It presents major difficulties in terms of size and design; location; and management/staffing arrangements.

TABLE 1 CHILDREN'S UNITS IN NORTH LANARKSHIRE

Name Of Unit	Location	Places
Cecil Street	Coatbridge	13
Leslie Street	Motherwell	7
Mitchell Street	Airdrie	14
Torrance Avenue	Airdrie	7
Pine Court	Cumbernauld	7

- 3.2 **Size and Design.** It is now commonly held that children's units should accommodate no more than 5 to 6 residents in order to create better balanced group living and a homely atmosphere. None of the Council's homes are smaller than 7 places and two are hostel-type buildings which are more than double the desirable size. Much of the accommodation has a less than "homely" appearance or design and none of it could be described as modern. Most of the accommodation was inherited from Strathclyde Regional Council.
- 3.3 **Location.** Upon admission the aim is to secure continuity for the young person in as many areas of their life as possible e.g. school, support networks etc. This is particularly important as most planning seeks to return the young person to their family home.
- 3.4 **Management/Staffing.** Research shows that it is extremely difficult for children to live, and staff to work, within large institutional-style buildings. Smaller scale units nurture a sense of ownership amongst residents and staff and reduce the impact of challenging behaviour and disruption which adversely affects relationships with neighbours and the local community.

4. PRESENTING NEED

- 4.1 Whilst the Council is developing a range of community supports available for children, young people and their families, a significant scale of residential care is required in order that the Council meets its legal responsibilities.
- 4.2 There are many reasons why children and young people require to be accommodated. These range from being victims of physical and/or sexual abuse, poor or erratic parenting (often as a result of alcohol or drug misuse on the part of parents), family breakdown and/or difficult or anti social behaviour. Caring for some of these young people can be a difficult and a demanding task. However it is important to recognise that many young people who have been looked after and accommodated make successful transitions into adult life, and establish flourishing relationships and careers. The quality of care provided has a direct bearing on the outcomes achieved.

4.3 An analysis of admissions to residential care in North Lanarkshire over the last three years shows:

- 87 children and young people have entered residential settings over the past 3 years.
- Most (86%) of children and young people accommodated are aged between 12-15 years.
- In terms of duration of stay, 52% were accommodated for less than a year (half of whom were accommodated for less than 6 weeks); 31% for between 1-3 years; and 17% for more than 3 years.
- The residential child care population at 31.3.03 was 62 (including 15 young people in residential schools) which is 10.05% of the total looked after child care population.

5. FUTURE REQUIREMENTS

5.1 The ultimate number of required residential care places will become clearer once new community based alternatives are developed and evaluated. As a first stage position it is considered that the Council could operate with 40 places, seeking to reduce further as other services are established. This aspiration will be influenced by any future policy or legislative changes.

5.2 The proposed intention is:

- To progressively create more community based alternatives.
- To reduce the number of residential care home places
- To build two new homes to high quality design specifications
- To reconfigure existing provision so achieving, over time, a position whereby no home provided will exceed six places and a more appropriate geographical spread of services across North Lanarkshire

6. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

6.1 A detailed options appraisal exercise has been carried out to achieve the above objectives. Identification of potential sites for children's homes was undertaken by Housing and Property Services - in keeping with the findings of the Member/Officer review they were asked to prioritise potential alternatives to Cecil Street, Coatbridge and Pine Court, Cumbernauld.

6.2 Each site was assessed against benefits criteria developed from best practice. The criteria were in three sections:

- Practical requirements (affordability, planning consent, readiness for use, regulation of care issues)
- Quality of provision and outcomes for children and young people (safety and security, accessibility, integration)
- Addressing concerns and consultation (community effect and acceptability).

6.3 Each criterion was awarded a weighting and the methodology independently scrutinised by the Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care.

7. ANALYSIS

- 7.1 Options in Coatbridge were identified as six empty sites and one vacant, former residential respite care building owned by the Council in Buchanan Street. The last scored significantly higher than the other sites. Apart from issues such as accessibility, it requires no new planning consent and can be adapted at a cost that would demonstrate best value in the use of resources. The building already has five bedrooms which, though not en-suite, already meet space standards applied by the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care. There are significant issues about the suitability of all other identified sites.
- 7.2 Options in Wishaw were not investigated beyond the Kirknowe site. As the site is already used by the Social Work Department to provide services to children and young people, and it meets desirable site and design specifications, it was thought unnecessary to pursue other options. It is proposed to build a six place unit to the highest specification on the site.
- 7.3 Three potential sites were identified in Cumbernauld but no scoring has been carried out at this stage as each of the sites presents issues about suitability and further assessments are taking place.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 The outcome of the Options Appraisal exercise has informed the following recommendations:
- 8.2 **Phase 1** - The proposed replacement of Cecil Street with a five bedded unit at the former respite care unit at Buchanan Street, Coatbridge.
- 8.3 **Phase 2** -The relocation of day services currently provided on the Kirknowe site in Wishaw to Cecil Street and the creation of a new purpose built six bedded unit at Kirknowe.
- 8.4 **Phase 3** - A proposed new build six bedded children's home to be built on a site in Cumbernauld to replace Pine Court. At the time of writing analysis of the site options has not been concluded.
- 8.5 The cost of the proposed developments in Phases 1, 2, and 3 have been laid aside in the Council's capital plan for Social Work.
- 8.6 **Phase 4** - Future plans to reconfigure remaining provision in keeping with the principles and approach set out in this document.