

To: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE	Subject: SERVICE DEVELOPMENTS – CHILD PROTECTION AND LOOKED AFTER AND ACCOMMODATED CHILDREN	
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		
Date: 20 MAY 2004	Ref: SD/EM	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT / INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. To seek Committee approval for service developments in the Department's Children and Family Services. To assist the Department meet National and Council requirements in respect of Child Protection and children who are Looked After and Accommodated.

2. BACKGROUND

Child Protection

- 2.1 In November 2002 the Scottish Executive published their report "It's Everyone's Job to Make Sure I'm Alright" the report of the National Audit and Review of Child Protection in Scotland. The Review followed from the death of a child, Kennedy McFarlane, from Dumfries and Galloway.
- 2.2 Subsequent to this report the Executive launched a 3 year Reform Programme and formed a National Action Team to progress this.
- 2.3 To date there have been 2 National summits on Child Protection, led by the First Minister and involving Council Leaders, Chief Officers and Senior Managers from a range of key agencies.
- 2.4 At the most recent summit on 22 March 2004 the Framework for Child Protection Standards and the Children's Charter were launched. These were reported to Policy and Resources on 20th April 2004. Included within the developments is the creation of a Multi-Disciplinary Inspection Team which will undertake Pilot Inspections by the end of 2004.
- 2.5 North Lanarkshire has responded to the National Audit and report by formulating inter-agency and Social Work Department Action Plans. Both plans have been signed off by the Child Protection Committee.
- 2.6 In January 2003 the Scottish Executive published "Getting our Priorities Right", inter agency guidance and protocols for work with families where parental substance misuse is a factor.
- 2.7 Local Protocols will be launched and implemented in June 2004. A large scale inter-agency training programme is underway and will continue for the next 12 months.

2.8 In November 2003 the Ministers for Education and Children, Justice and Health and Community Care wrote a letter to Local Authority Leaders, Chief Executives, Chief Constables and the Chief Executive of the NHS asking for a 'Joint Statement of Assurance' in respect of Child Protection activity within their area. This letter is due to be submitted to the Executive by the end of May 2004 and is currently being drafted.

2.9 In view of the developing agenda both Nationally and within the Authority, including the increasing accountability and scrutiny of practice it is considered necessary to develop a post which will take a lead in implementing and monitoring the Department's Child Protection activity including implementation of the National Action Plan. This is an approach being adopted by a number of other Local Authorities.

Children Looked After and Accommodated

2.10 In 2003 the Member/Officer Group on Children's Services reported to Committee and made a number of recommendations to be progressed including;

- to develop a contract foster carers scheme
- to modernise the Council's residential child care provision

2.11 There are a number of legislative and policy imperatives directly relating to looked after and accommodated children which place responsibilities on the Council which include:-

- redressing the balance of care
- developing community based alternatives to residential care
- developing quality residential care delivered in small units
- Learning with Care
- Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001
- implementation of a number of Enquiry Reports such as the "Fife Report", and "Another Kind of Home"

2.12 In addition a number of regulation arrangements are being introduced which require the Council to provide quality leadership in respect of Children who are Looked After and Accommodated. These include:-

- the regulation of residential care and the need to address National Standards;
- the requirement that the Council registers as an Adoption and Fostering Agency with the Care Commission by 1st October 2004 and the need to take account of National Standards;
- the regulation of the workforce (Social Services Council) and the need to develop a programme for qualification.

2.13 The Department is experiencing difficulties in developing sufficient fostering and residential care placements for young people at risk and the development of an alternative care strategy is required.

2.14 There is an increase in performance reporting to the Executive including a major transfer of Throughcare responsibilities to the Council (previously reported to Committee).

2.15 These new developments and increased responsibilities require the Department to provide clear leadership and direction for services and staff.

3. PROPOSALS / CONSIDERATIONS

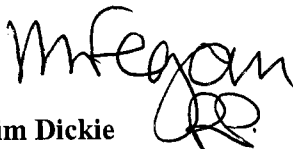
- 3.1. As outlined above there are significant new requirements and duties for the Social Work Department in respect of Child Protection and Children who are Looked After and Accommodated.
- 3.2. There is a need to enhance the Children and Families Headquarters Section to meet those responsibilities. It is proposed to:-
- delete a vacant post of Senior Child Care Officer (Addictions), (Grade PO2)
 - create 1 post of Service Manager, Child Protection (Grade PO 11)
 - create 1 post of Service Co-ordinator Children and Families, with a lead responsibility for children who are Looked After and Accommodated (Grade PO8)

4. FINANCIAL / PERSONNEL / LEGAL / POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. The reshaping and enhancement of the service will be funded by the deletion of the post of Senior Child Care Officer (Addictions) and monies from Changing Children's Services Fund.
- 4.2. The resources for the Child Protection post is to be funded from the Changing Children's Services Fund and has been agreed by the Scottish Executive.
- 4.3. The resources for the Looked After and Accommodated post will come from deleting the Senior Child Care Officer post within the balance coming from modernisation of Children's Units bid to the Scottish Executive.
- 4.4. The total additional cost of these proposals is £44728.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1. Committee is asked to
- (i) Agree the deletion and creation of the posts outlined in 3.2;
- Delete 1 post of Senior Child Care Officer Addictions Grade PO2
 - Create 1 post of Service Manager Child Protection Grade PO 11
 - Create 1 post of Service Co-ordinator Children and Families Grade PO8
- (ii) Remit to Policy and Resources (Personnel) Sub Committee for consideration
- (iii) Otherwise note the content of this report



Jim Dickie
Director of Social Work
6 May 2004

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