

To: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE		Subject: FOSTERING DEVELOPMENTS : PROGRESS REPORT
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		
Date: 24 th August 2006	Ref: JM/JG	

1. Purpose of Report/Introduction

To advise committee of progress in implementing the council's fostering strategy, which seeks to improve the recruitment, retention and support of foster carers.

2. Background

2.1. In November 2004, the Scottish Executive announced the availability of additional funding to improve fostering services. The allocation to North Lanarkshire Council is:

2005/6	£91,500
2006/7	£183,000
2007/8	£91,500

The three key areas that the Executive wish to see improve are:

- Recruitment of foster carers
- Retention of foster carers
- Increased placement choice

2.2. In January 2006, North Lanarkshire Council completed its review of fostering services. It has set a clear vision for fostering services, including a strategy for the recruitment, training and retention of foster carers and a financial framework, which will underpin the strategy.

2.3. In May 2006, North Lanarkshire Council's commitment to the fostering strategy was endorsed by Social Work Committee, which also agreed additional funding to implement the strategy.

2.4. At present, foster care resources are not meeting the demand for appropriate placement choice. It is anticipated that the current foster care recruitment campaign will come some way to address this. Consequently, these developments will significantly improve outcomes for children who are looked after and accommodated.

3. Proposals/Considerations

3.1 Progress has been made by :

- commencing a foster care campaign in May 2006 which will feature at agreed periods, throughout the next 2 years (to date this has resulted in 118 enquiries, 51 home visits by staff, the attendance of 24 people at preparatory groups and the commencement of 11 assessments)
- implementing a fee based payment scheme for foster carers, based on a competency skills model

- revising the recruitment pack, which is made available to the public and other agencies to outline the benefits of becoming a carer in North Lanarkshire.
 - initiating development work with the British Association of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) to modernise the Adoption, Fostering and Family Placement Panel
 - engaging with the North Lanarkshire Carers Consultative Group, which is a constituted group of foster carers aiming to secure involvement in all matters relating to their role, to explore options for improving partnership arrangements with the council and other agencies.
 - undertaking some initial feasibility work to consider the benefits of developing a carers resource centre. Such a facility would provide a focus for carers for training, meetings, office space, resource materials and a crèche facility. In addition, it would accommodate staff with responsibility for assessment and support of carers
- 3.2 A proposal paper outlining the objectives of the member / officer group on adoption and fostering services is the subject of a separate report to committee, and seeks to build on the progress made to date.

4. Financial/Personnel/Legal/Policy Implications

- 4.1 As outlined at point 2.1, the Scottish Executive has made funding available over the period 2005-2008 to meet the costs of the developments relating to recruitment and retention.
- 4.2 In addition, an allocation of funding has been made available by the council (Changing Children's Services Funding) to meet the costs of the introduction of fees and increased allowances.

5. Recommendations

Committee is asked to :

- i. note the contents of the report.



Jim Dickie
Director of Social Work
25th July 2005

For further information on this report please contact Susan Taylor, Manager, Children, Families and Justice (tel: 01698 332032) or Jim McCreanor, Service Manager Children & Families on tel (01698 332723)