

To: SOCIAL WORK (OPERATIONS & SERVICES) SUB COMMITTEE		Subject: AN ACTION PLAN FOR SCOTLAND'S CHILDREN - BETTER INTEGRATED CHILDREN'S SERVICES - REPORT BY THE SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		
Date: 6 December 2001	Ref: SD/JH	

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT / INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 To inform Committee of the contents of the report for "Scotland's Children – Better Integrated Children's Services" and recommendations of the Action Plan which has been produced by the Scottish Executive.

### 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A team of secondees from Local Government, Health and the Voluntary Sector were commissioned by the Scottish Executive to develop an Action Plan for better integrated services for children. The Action Plan was to be supported by examples of good practice.
- 2.2 As part of their remit, the team considered a wide range of children's services in Scotland. They heard views and experiences from children and families and a wide range of agencies and organisations.
- 2.3 A range of interested parties were also invited to thematic discussions, two national seminars and specific events.
- 2.4 Previous initiatives by the Executive such as Sure Start, New Community Schools and Social Inclusion Partnerships have shown there is much to be gained from bringing services together to meet the needs of individual children and families.
- 2.5 This is consistent with previous developments in Community Care and Criminal Justice.

### 3. CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Action Team identified that there are difficulties in the present delivery of services:
- Some children are "born to fail"
  - There are children who are invisible to services
  - Co-ordination of services is not widespread
  - The most vulnerable children can be excluded by services such as G.P. deregistration, school exclusion, eviction.
  - No consistent "helper" is available for each child requiring special assistance.
  - There are difficulties in information sharing between agencies.
  - There is a shortage of skills in working with families.
- 3.2 The Report cites examples of areas which have moved toward a more integrated approach to service delivery. In such areas there were a number of identifiable characteristics which included, a clear and shared vision, clarity of roles and responsibilities, transparency of information and resources and a commitment to improve services.

- 3.3 Better integrated working will make better use of existing resources and will in addition be supported by the Changing Children's Services Fund announced in February 2001.
- 3.4 The Action Plan details six recommendations:
- (i) Consider Children's Services as a single service system:  
A fundamental culture change is required where different staff see themselves delivering children's services within a single system. There should be multi agency consideration of need, access points, financial and resource planning which makes best use of the expertise of the full range of staff.
  - (ii) Establish a joint Children's Services Plan:  
Guidance on planning services is being issued. The need for Children's Services Plans to be seen as a joint task for Local Authorities and other partners, especially N.H.S. boards is stressed.  
(North Lanarkshire Council is given as a positive example detailing its structured approach to planning activities within the context of the Community Plan. The Assistant Chief Executive also chairs the North Lanarkshire Children's Services Strategy Group which develops a multi agency/multi disciplinary approach to Children's Services)
  - (iii) Ensure inclusive access to universal services:  
Arrangements should be in place to ensure identification of, and to maintain contact with all families through access to the universal services of health and education. This will be particularly important for those with disorganised or transient lifestyles to avoid children becoming "lost".
  - (iv) Co-ordinate needs assessment:  
Every child should have a named individual who will function as the main point of information for the child and who can co-ordinate whether other specialist support is required. In the majority of instances this will be an individual within universal provision such as a health visitor or guidance teacher. This should be made explicit within Children's Service Plans and other public information.  
Models for staged intervention should be developed setting out the responsibilities of universal and targeted services, the requirement for services and establishes information sharing and assessment arrangements. The use of a single assessment format is encouraged. Social Work Services are targeted services.
  - (v) Co-ordinate Intervention:  
Some individuals may require support within a tiered/staged model of intervention. In this case a care co-ordinator will be identified to ensure progression to the appropriate service for the child and family.
  - (vi) Target Services:  
Each Children's Services Plan should set out how they will provide excellent universal services for all and target additional services to meet need and reduce inequalities. In order to do this there must be a common and agreed understanding of a "child in need". The Action Team has developed a simple framework to this end:
    - Children sought out by agencies.
    - Children coming to the attention of agencies.
    - Emerging issues.
    - Predictability.

- 3.5 The Action Team made recommendations to create a framework within which the necessary changes to fulfil the Action Plan can take place. These recommendations include the Scottish Executive issuing guidance on, shared financial approaches with acceptable accountability frameworks, options to resolve boundary issues for different agencies and the role of the voluntary sector. The Executive should also commission the development of a modular assessment format, reinforce the requirement of the provision of education to those excluded from school, establish a change support agency to facilitate progress towards better integrated children's services and establish robust and universal arrangements for the collection, analysis and reporting of information.
- 3.6 The Action Plan will be progressed through the Council's Children's Services Strategy Group with proposals for the use of the monies being reported to Policy and Resources Committee. The Changing Children's Services Fund was announced in February 2001. The bulk of this fund, £63.5 million nationally, will be made available in 2002/03 and 2003/04. The allocation for North Lanarkshire is £1,747,000 in 2002/03 and £2,361,000 in 2003/04.

#### 4. CHANGING CHILDRENS SERVICES FUND

- 4.1 The Changing Children's Services Fund announced in February 2001 it envisaged to deliver better outcomes for children and young people through:
- Expansion of good practice in delivery of well integrated services
  - Modernisation to reshape existing services to achieve better integrated support
  - And new and innovative approaches to integrated service delivery
- 4.2 It was also recommended that the Changing Children's Services Fund should be made available on the basis of a commitment by local agencies within the agreed Children's Services Planning area to implement the Action Plan.

#### 5. NORTH LANARKSHIRE'S POSITION

- 5.1 North Lanarkshire has made significant progress in respect of Integrated Services for children since the Council was established. Examples include
- partnership with Health/Education/Carers/Voluntary Sector providers in respect of Transitional Planning arrangements
  - the development and implementation of community schools.

#### 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Committee is asked to:
- (i) Request that the Director of Social Work bring forward a future report detailing the progress of the Action Plan.
  - (ii) Otherwise note the recommendations of the Action Plan

**Jim Dickie**  
Director of Social Work  
23<sup>rd</sup> November 2001



A copy of the Action Plan is available in the Members Library.

*For further information on this report please contact Susan Devlin, Manager, Children & Families and Criminal Justice, TEL: (01698 332000)*