

To: SOCIAL WORK (OPERATIONS AND SERVICES) SUB COMMITTEE		Subject: LINK CARERS SCHEME
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		
Date: 5 OCTOBER 2004	Ref: JD/FB/TL	

### 1. Purpose of Report/Introduction

To update Committee on the progress of the review of the departmental policy for Link Care and Kinship Care.

### 2. Background

- 2.1. Following the last Sub-Committee in July 2004, an action plan, in relation to the Link Carer Scheme was developed to allow full consultation with other local authorities regarding their policy and procedures in relation to Link Care and Kinship Care. This facilitates a review of existing arrangements for funding families within North Lanarkshire with a view to reviewing the existing policy inherited from Strathclyde Regional Council.
- 2.2. An initial review has now been completed with local authorities across Scotland. From this it is clear that there is no uniformity of approach to the support offered to carers in this situation.
- 2.3. Many local authorities have no scheme to support Link Carers or Kinship while other authorities have developed a full Kinship Care Scheme. This has implications for both funding and for social work staffing levels.
- 2.4. The variation on the schemes is considerable with some authorities paying Kinship Carers a one off payment through Section 22, Children [Scotland] Act 1995; others paying regular allowances through Section 22, some paying Department of Works and Pension rates; whilst other authorities are paying a form of custody allowance under Section 50, Children Act 1975.
- 2.5. The Scottish Executive has recently concluded a consultation exercise regarding Link Care and Kinship Care Schemes. Information should be presented to the Executive in the near future and national guidance will follow for all local authorities which will help inform this Council's position.

### 3. Proposals/Considerations

- 3.1. As agreed, the Department is conducting a review of the existing arrangements of Link Carer Allowances paid.
- 3.2. Discussions are taking place with the Council's Legal Services and the Social Work Strategy section to clarify the Council's legal duties and other opportunities available to support such families.

- 3.3. It is proposed that a number of the existing schemes need to be considered in detail to assist with informing North Lanarkshire Council's Link Care/Kinship Care. Highland Council for example pay Kinship Care at the same rate as foster carers, Glasgow City Council make no payments.
- 3.4. At present North Lanarkshire Council has 61 children in receipt of Link Care allowance, which equates to 48 families receiving allowance.
- 3.5. Three families are currently appealing against the Department's decision to refuse the award of a Link Carers allowance, using the same representative. There is some concerns that these may be the basis of a campaign. A request has been made for a provisional date for a Social Work Complaints Review Committee.

#### 4. **Financial/Personnel/Legal/Policy Implications**

- 4.1. The present cost of the Link Carer allowance totals £109,000. If the Council were to amend North Lanarkshire Council's scheme to paying Linked Carers the same rate as registered foster carers this would require additional funding in excess of £630,000 per annum.
- 4.2. This amount of monies would only meet the additional cost to existing recipients and would not address the unknown number of Kinship Carers who live in North Lanarkshire.
- 4.3. Consideration would also have to be given to registration of Link Carers/Kinship Carers through the Adoption and Family Placement Panel and development of structures and procedures to support this process. These would also have staffing implications for the Council.

#### 5. **Recommendation**

- 5.1 Committee is asked to:
  - (i) note the content of this report
  - (ii) request the Director of Social Work to forward further reports on the operation and review of the Link Carers Scheme



**Director of Social Work**  
**16 September 2004**

For further information on this report please contact Fiona Brown on telephone 01698 332185