

To: SOCIAL WORK (OPERATIONS AND SERVICES) SUB COMMITTEE		Subject: THE NORTH AND SOUTH LANARKSHIRE PROTOCOL ON WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AFFECTED BY PARENTAL SUBSTANCE MISUSE
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		
Date: 29 JUNE 2005	Ref: MCF/JH	

### 1. Purpose of Report

To advise Committee of the Social Work Department's response to supporting children and families affected by substance misuse following publication of "Getting Our Priorities Right – Good Practice for Working with Children and Families affected by Substance Misuse" in 2003 by the Scottish Executive.

### 2. Background

- 2.1. In September 2001, the Scottish Executive published the consultation document "Getting Our Priorities Right". This document considered the effects parental substance misuse could have on children, emphasised the need for identification of such children and explicitly noted their needs as priority, recommending the need for support, integrated working and information sharing within and between involved agencies. The subsequent policy document offers guidance in terms of the effects and risks for children where there is parental drug and/or alcohol misuse.
- 2.2. The publication of Hidden Harm by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs in 2003 recorded research which estimates that there are between 41,000 and 59,000 children in Scotland with a problem drug-using parent. This represents about 4-6% of all children under 16 years of age.

### 3. Action to Date

- 3.1. Following publication of the Scottish Executive consultation document the Department, in conjunction with South Lanarkshire Council Social Work Resources and Lanarkshire Alcohol and Drug Action Team, established an Inter-Agency Steering Group to plan and progress action required to provide an agreed inter-agency protocol and operational procedures in parental substance misuse guidance.
- 3.2. The Steering Group subsequently commissioned an officer from S.T.R.A.D.A. (Scottish Training on Drugs and Alcohol) who had previously contributed to the Scottish Executive Guidance to work with staff from agencies within Lanarkshire on a Lanarkshire-wide protocol. This was subsequently approved by both North and South Lanarkshire's Child Protection Committee for use within the respective Councils and partner agencies.

- 3.3. The Lanarkshire Inter-Agency Protocol and Operational Procedures for Working with Children and Families affected by Substance Misuse was launched in July 2004.
- 3.4. Prior to the launch, a series of inter-agency briefings for priority front line staff and managers took place to facilitate implementation of the policy. Within North Lanarkshire an Inter-Agency Implementation Group was also established to progress implementation, including raising awareness of the Protocols, collating the number of referrals made within each agency and action taken on these within and between agencies. This Group reports back to the Steering Group and ultimately each Child Protection Committee on the effects/outcomes of the Protocol and any resourcing/practice issues the Steering Group has and will continue to consider and co-ordinate inter-agency locality based training.
- 3.5. The Steering Group has agreed the provision of ongoing training and has purchased the services of two Trainers for a year from S.T.R.A.D.A. / Drugscope to facilitate 14 days per month training in both North and South Lanarkshire. Training is co-ordinated and evaluated within the Department in conjunction with the Steering Group.
- 3.6. Experienced staff within North Lanarkshire Social Work Department have been identified to jointly present the one-day briefing sessions to staff to ensure detail on Child Protection and the two-day course offers skills based training to staff working directly with children and their parents. Training has also been offered to relevant voluntary organisations.
- 3.7 Within the Department, monitoring of referrals received in relation to the Protocol since July 2004 has been undertaken in conjunction with performance information collated in terms of Child Protection. There are currently 67 referrals recorded on the database at Headquarters. There have been 67 families referred in terms of the protocol since July, 2004.

#### **4. Proposals/Considerations**

- 4.1. It is proposed that the Inter-Agency Steering Group, the Implementation Group and relevant Departmental staff continue to progress and monitor implementation of the policy and address any implications arising in terms of practice, resourcing and inter-agency working.
- 4.2. Child Protection Services within North Lanarkshire will be inspected on a multi-disciplinary basis in the near future. Action undertaken in respect of children affected by parental substance misuse will be included in terms of evaluating performance.

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

- 5.1 The development and implementation of the Protocol have been resource intensive, albeit training assistance has been purchased from S.T.R.A.D.A.
- 5.2 The Child Protection Committee has submitted a bid to the Changing Children's Services Fund to appoint a Training Co-ordinator to assist with the co-ordination of such training initiatives.
- 5.3 The Policy has also had an impact on Area Teams as the number of pre-birth case conferences has increased. This is being monitored by Headquarters staff. From January 2005 to March 2005 there were 54 case discussions held across the Authority.
- 5.4 A copy of the Inter-Agency Protocol and the Operational Procedures 'Getting Our Priorities Right' and 'Hidden Harm' are available within the Member's Library.

## 6. Recommendation

6.1 The Committee is asked to:

- (i) note the Social Work Department's role in the implementation and launch of the Protocol.
- (ii) otherwise note the content of the Report.

  
Jim Dickie  
Director of Social Work  
13 April 2005

For further information on this report please contact Margaret C French, Service Manager, Children, Families & Justice Section TEL: (01698 332650)